

Implementation of the foundations for learning programme  
in numeracy: experiences of grade three teachers in the  
Ekurhuleni South District

by

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that this dissertation “**The experiences of teachers in implementing the Foundations For Learning Programme (FFLP) in numeracy in grade three**” is my own unaided work and that each source of information used has been acknowledged by means of a complete reference. This dissertation has not been submitted before for any other research project, degree or examination at any other university.

.....  
(Signature of student)

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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- My late father and mother for their support throughout all my studies and their constant encouragement to me to take on the next challenge.
- The participants who agreed to participate in this study. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me.

## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to the memory of my father, the late Mr Pat Govender.

This study is also dedicated to my family for their unconditional love, support and encouragement during the writing up of this research report.

## **ABSTRACT**

The primary aim of this study was to explore and gain a deeper insight of the experiences of grade three teachers implementing the Foundations for Learning Programme (FFLP) that was launched in 2008. This study commenced at a time when the FFLP was being touted as a potentially strong campaign, in as far as, supporting and guiding Foundation Phase teachers in the classroom. I was for this reason motivated to investigate the extent to which teachers are experiencing the FFLP positively or negatively.

The research strategy that I employed for this study was grounded within an interpretative research paradigm underpinned by Generic Qualitative Research method. The primary data collection strategy for this Generic Qualitative study was based on an in-depth interview conducted with ten grade three educators from five different schools (one school from each of the five quintiles) within the Ekurhuleni South School District administered by the Gauteng Department of Education. The non-probability sampling strategy was used to select the sample for this study. The five schools were selected using convenience sampling. The ten teachers were selected using the purposive sampling method. The data gleaned was analysed using the constant comparative method (CCM) of data analysis. The CCM allowed the researcher to search for recurring themes and patterns. After in-depth abstraction from the transcripts, four major themes emerged, namely; teacher's perceived lack of understanding of the FFLP, positive and negative experiences in following the specifications and guidelines contained in the FFLP, administrative challenges in implementing the FFLP and the perceived lack of school and district support for grade three teachers.

From the findings, it was clear that the majority of the participants enjoyed ambivalent (i.e. a mixture of positive and negative) experiences of the FFLP. The findings also revealed that the ambivalent experiences were not confined to any one particular quintile ranked school, i.e. participants from schools in all five quintile ranking related both positive and negative experiences. Another finding from this study points to the fact that there is no one singular cause for the lack of implementation of the FFLP amongst the participants.

The study concludes by providing seven recommendations, namely; the immediate need for change management in schools and school districts; the need for continuous professional development for teachers, the need for capacity development for school management team members (SMT); the need to review budgeting and resource

allocation; the need for advocacy and marketing of the FFLP and the need for collaboration and networking amongst all stakeholders within the school educational landscape.

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### **LIST OF ACRONYMS, TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>DoBE</b>     | Department of Basic Education   |
| <b>DoE</b>      | Department of Education   |
| <b>Quintile</b> | Quintiles: South African schools have been categorized into quintiles (1-5), according to their economic levels. Quintile rankings (1-5) are determined by the socio economic status and infrastructure of the school. i.e. a school with |

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
|                                     | electricity, water, fencing, toilets, face brick etc. was regarded as rich and was classified as Quintile 5. These schools were allocated the lowest funding while quintile 1 schools are regarded as the poorest and receive the bulk of the earmarked funds from the DoE. Many quintile 1 schools have been categorized as “no fee” paying schools, i.e. parents do not pay school fees for learners attending these schools. |
| <b>FFLP</b>                         | Foundations for learning programme  |
| <b>SMT</b>                          | School Management Team  |
| <b>SD</b>                           | Denotes School District   |
| <b>DO</b>                           | District Officials  |
| <b>TIMMS</b>                        | TIMMS - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, 1999 and 2003. TIMMS is an international study to evaluate and assess numeracy in schools.   |
| <b>ACE</b>                          | Advanced Certificate In Education - ACE – is a two year part time qualification which enables a student who has graduated with a three year diploma to enter into an honours programme.   |
| <b>Government Gazette No. 30880</b> | Government Gazette No. 30880 is entitled: Foundations for learning campaign. This document spells out amongst others, the vision and mission of the campaign and the implementation plan with guidelines regarding the prescribed time allocation for Numeracy and Literacy.  |
| <b>LTSM</b>                         | Teacher learner support materials   |
| <b>RNCS</b>                         | Revised National Curriculum Statement   |
| <b>PCK</b>                          | Pedagogical Content Knowledge   |
| <b>CCM</b>                          | Constant comparative method – strategy used for analysing qualitative data  |



# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction and background to the study**

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning of mathematics and science is a challenge encountered within most educational landscapes of the world. National and international efforts abound in the form of strategies, policies, frameworks and campaigns to improve maths and science teaching and learning in schools.

In 2008, the Department of Education (DoE)<sup>1</sup> launched the Foundations for Learning Programme (FFLP) to improve the quality of teaching in the Intermediate and Foundation Phase. This four year programme is aimed at creating a “national focus to improve the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children” (Government Gazette No. 30880<sup>2</sup>, 2008: 4). Naledi Pandor (2005) argued that the FFLP seeks to “provide energy as well as direction and inspiration across all levels of the education system as well as in homes and the public domain”.

The Third International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS, 2003: 35) highlighted the poor performance of South African grade three learners in Numeracy and Literacy. Furthermore, the National Report on Systemic Evaluation, released by the DoE in 2003, also highlighted the poor performance of foundation phase learners in Numeracy and Literacy. The 2003 Systemic Evaluation, in which 54 000 grade three learners participated, indicated a serious shortcoming in the quality of education in South Africa. Against expected learning outcomes, scores of 50% in each of the three learning areas (Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills), average scores were 54% and 69% for life skills and listening comprehension, but only 38% for reading comprehension and 30% for numeracy (Department of Education, 2003 a). The 2005 Systemic Evaluation revealed that less than half of Grade 6 pupils were achieving the expected learning outcomes in Natural Sciences, 40% in the language of learning (mainly English), and only 20% in Mathematics. Perhaps, the steady decline in the throughput rates amongst foundation phase learners, as outlined above, was another reason that prompted the DoE to introduce the FFLP as a strategy to improve the learner performance during the foundation phase.

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<sup>1</sup> Now called the Department of Basic Education – DoBE.

<sup>2</sup> Government Gazette No. 30880 is entitled: Foundations for learning campaign. This document spells out amongst others, the vision and mission of the campaign and the implementation plan with guidelines regarding the prescribed time allocation for Numeracy and Literacy.

It is, therefore, assumed that the FFLP is a direct response to both international and national studies that have highlighted the poor performance of South African children, who are generally unable to read, write and count at expected age and in accordance with associated grade competency expectations.

While the initial focus of the FFLP is on primary schooling, beginning with the Foundation and Intermediate phases, the ultimate aim of the FFLP is to ensure that all learners across the entire educational system are able to perform at age appropriate levels.

## **1.2. ASSUMPTIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS**

My assumptions for this study are that:

### **1.2.1. The FFLP has had little or no impact on grade three teachers regarding the teaching and learning of numeracy.**

This assumption is informed by my observations and the experience of being employed as a part time lecturer at a local university in Gauteng, to teach in the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE)<sup>3</sup>: Foundation Phase; Numeracy programme. During the first lecture of this programme in 2009, I administered a Numeracy test to all the ACE students<sup>4</sup>. This Numeracy test (entitled: Grade 3 Numeracy Challenge) was set by the Gauteng Department of Education and was written by grade three learners in 2008.

The results obtained by the ACE students (in 2009) in the test were as follows:

- i. Of the 77 that wrote the test, 8% obtained an average mark of over 80%
- ii. 68% passed the test with a mark of 50% to 79%

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<sup>3</sup> ACE is a two year part time qualification which enables a student who has graduated with a three year diploma to enter into an honours programme.

<sup>4</sup> ACE students: the students for the ACE programme comprise of foundation phase teachers who are currently teaching grade 1, 2 or 3 in the Gauteng province.



- iii. 24% failed the test, i.e. obtained below 50%
- iv. On average, 84% of the students performed very poorly in the questions related to problem solving

The above results indicate that the FFLP has not had the desired effect of empowering teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the results illustrate that teachers are not experiencing the FFLP as a constructive and supportive intervention programme.

### **1.2.2. Teachers' lack of understanding of the guidelines contained in the FFLP**

I am employed as a Senior Education Specialist for Numeracy in the Foundation Phase by the Gauteng Department of Education. During my school visits I have observed, first hand, that many grade three teachers do not seem to understand the FFLP and are, therefore, not implementing the FFLP in the teaching of numeracy. It is for this reason that I decided to investigate the experiences of grade three teachers in implementing the FFLP in Numeracy.

## **1.3. ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Evidence from international (TIMMS, 2003), national (DoE, 2003a) and provincial (Gauteng Provincial Education Department, 2007) studies on numeracy reveal that the majority of learners in South Africa do not reach the expected levels of competency in numeracy. The Baseline Report on Provincial Assessment for Foundation Phase, released by the Gauteng Department of Education in 2008, highlighted a similar trend where the foundation phase learner's achievement in numeracy is far below age appropriate levels. In response to the poor achievement in numeracy amongst foundation phase learners, the National Department of Education (DoE) launched the Foundations for Learning Programme (FFLP) in March 2008. The FFLP is intended to increase the average learner performance in both literacy and numeracy to at least 50%, which equates to an improvement of between 15% and 20% by 2011.

While the FFLP is intended to assist and support teachers by specifying the following: i.e. the milestones to guide teachers on how to pace the curriculum content over a school year, the amount of time to be allocated for each of the daily activities, the necessary teaching resources required in numeracy, as well as standardised assessment programmes, research literature reveals that there are compelling arguments against these prescriptions.

Despite clear specifications to teachers, it seems, from anecdotal evidence, that many teachers are not teaching numeracy according to the specifications outlined in the FFLP Gazette No. 30880. This led me to explore if it is indeed the case that many teachers are not implementing the FFLP, and to understand why it is not being implemented. It may well be that the prescriptions made by the FFLP are serving as barriers to teachers instead of supporting and facilitating them. It is necessary to determine, however, whether there are there other reasons why teachers may not be implementing the FFLP. In exploring this issue, I decided to focus on teachers teaching grade three numeracy, since this is the exit grade for learners in the foundation phase.

Against the background highlighted above, the main research question for this study is: “What are the experiences of grade three Numeracy teachers in the implementation of the FFLP?”

#### **1.4. Aim of the study**

In view of the above orientation and problem statement, the aim of this study is to identify and analyse the experiences of grade three Numeracy educators in implementing the FFLP.

#### **1.5. Research perspective and methodology**

This section provides a brief overview of the research perspective and methods employed in the study. Further detail is provided in chapter three on this matter. The study was conducted from an interpretive perspective. Interpretive inquiry aims to characterize how people experience the world, the way they interact with each other, and the settings in which these interactions take place.

I conducted a generic qualitative study. According to Merriam (2002: 11), generic qualitative research “simply seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved”. For the purpose of this study, I intended to investigate, i.e. to identify and understand the experiences of teachers who are supposed to be implementing the FFLP according to the specifications of Gazette No. 30880.

Data in this study was obtained by way of purposive sampling (Merriam: 2002). I chose purposive sampling, because it allows for the deliberate selection of a targeted sample population. My sample population consisted of 10 grade three teachers, selected from 5 schools from the different quintiles in the Ekurhuleni South District.

Data were collected by means of conducting in-depth interviews with the grade three teachers, in order to explore their perspectives and experiences on the implementation of the FFLP.

I used the constant comparative method (developed by Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) to analyse the interview data. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 135), this method involves coding data by category, comparing meanings across categories, refining categories, exploring relationships and patterns across categories, and integrating the data to develop an understanding of people and the setting being studied.

## **1.6. Trustworthiness**

According to Patton (2002: 113), the aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry’s findings are “worth paying attention to”. In addressing the issue of trustworthiness, Merriam (1998: 189) contends that “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner”. In terms of maintaining validity for this study, I followed the standards based model advocated by Eisenhart and Howe (1992), who propose five standards for maintaining validity in qualitative research (1992: 31). These standards are discussed in detail in chapter three.

## **1.7. Ethical considerations**

In order to ensure that ethical standards were met in conducting this research, I ensured that all my actions had been undertaken in a responsible and accountable manner. Prior to conducting this study I sought written consent from the participants, the school principal, the district director of Ekurhuleni South District and the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE).

Furthermore, I considered the following principles in order to ensure that the ethical standards were maintained, namely; informed consent, fairness and objectivity and confidentiality. I ensured that the participants, school principal and the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) was informed of the research process, aims, objectives and rationale of the research prior to conducting the study. The identity of the participants, as well as their responses and feedback, was kept confidential at all times. Every attempt was made to ensure that the research report was accurately and objectively formulated and clearly conveyed.

## **1.8. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

The structure of the study is presented below:

**Chapter one:** Serves as an introduction. This chapter includes the research question, the aims and objectives of the study, motivation for the study, problem statement and context, a brief overview of the research methodology, as well as my assumptions and presuppositions as a researcher.

**Chapter two:** This chapter presents an overview of relevant literature.

**Chapter three:** The rationale for the choice of methodology and research procedures for the study is presented.

**Chapter four:** Data collection and data analysis is described.

**Chapter five:** This chapter focuses on the presentation of the findings of the study.

**Chapter six:** This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations.

## **1.9. SUMMARY**

This introductory chapter outlines the context in which the study is undertaken thereby providing the background to this study. The chapter further sets out the aims and objectives of this investigation and explains the theoretical perspectives that inform it. This is followed by a discussion of the researcher's assumptions and presuppositions related to the study, as well as an orientation to the research methodology. The chapter concludes with a structure of the study.

The next chapter will present a review of selected literature, which will provide the theoretical foundation and direction for this study.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1994, post Apartheid education has given birth to many policies within the South African educational landscape. The rate at which these policies have been introduced has led to what I refer to as “policy indigestion” amongst many teachers, parents, principals, district officials, etc. While most of the policy intentions appear to be valid, it is the implementation of these policies that pose many challenges to the “actors” (teachers) who have to implement them. The purpose of this study is to explore the implementation of one such policy, namely the Foundations for Learning Programme (FFLP), which was the topic of a government gazette in 2008. The intent of the FFLP appears to be very clear, unambiguous and easy to comprehend, however, the implementation of the FFLP by the teachers in the respective grades (1-6) seems to be cause for much concern.

For the purpose of this study, my research question was: What are the experiences of grade three numeracy teachers in the implementation of the FFLP. I was interested in finding out why is it that some teachers were able to implement it the way it was intended to be implemented, whilst others struggled. In order to gain prior knowledge about this research question I undertook an in-depth literature review in order to shed light on my research problem.

The term “policy” is an elusive concept to define (Goel and Goel, 1994) and therefore merits clarification. “Policy”, as a process, concept and term, tends to be used loosely and interchangeably to refer to guidelines, bills, acts and frameworks. I, for this reason, find it necessary to analyse and unpack some of the ideas, meanings, views and interpretations surrounding the meaning and understanding of the word “policy”. As a point of departure, I draw on the work of scholars such as Graham (1993), Ball (1994), Harman (1994) and Fulcher (1998) cited in Trowler (2003), who have written extensively on “policy” in the following section. I also conclude the section by providing my own interpretation and understanding of “policy”, in order to define the way it will be used in this study.

## **2.2. CLARIFICATION OF THE CONCEPT “POLICY”**

There is wide consensus amongst scholars such as Ball (1994), Trowler (2003), Harman (1994) and Graham (1993) that policy is an elusive concept to define, because of its complex and dynamic nature.

According to Trowler (2003: 95), education policy is “a specification of principles and actions related to educational issues which are followed or which should be followed and which are designed to bring about desired goals”. He further states that policy is not straightforward, and that is influenced by three key factors, which make it complex and dynamic. The first factor is the conflict, amongst those who formulate policy, and those who put it into practice, over what the important issues or problems are, as well as the desired goals. The second factor relates to the interpretation of policy statements, which is in-itself always subject to multiple interpretations that depend on the standpoint of the people conducting the interpretive work. The third factor, identified by Trowler (2003), concerns the complexities arising from putting the policy into practice, which often results in unintended outcomes that deviate from the policy makers’ intentions. I believe that one of the shortcomings of Trowler’s (2003) explanation is that he does not take into account that policies may arise due to perceived or identified problems, i.e. policies are complex and dynamic, and cannot appease everyone, especially those who do not experience the issue as problematic in the first place. I argue that Trowler (2003) does not take the question of who identified the problem and who benefits from the policy, in so far as addressing the problem, into account. These two questions make policy initiation, formulation and implementation complex and dynamic.

Harman (1994), cited in Trowler (2003), defines policy as the “ implicit or explicit specifications of courses of purposive action being followed or to be followed in dealing with a recognised problem or matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals”. Taylor (1997: 62) argues that Harman’s (1994) definition has several shortcomings in relation to “how policy works in practice”. He believes that policy should rather be viewed as a process as it refers to the politics involved in the recognition of a “problem”, which requires a policy response through the formulation and implementation stages, including changes



made along the way. Harman's (1994) definition conveys the impression that there is consensus when policies are generated and that they are implemented in a straightforward way. However, in reality society is complex and consists of competing groups that have different values and variable access to power. This, in turn, gives rise to a power struggle between the initiator and the individual who is to implement the policy. Policies are, therefore, never neutral. All policies have some bias towards the "initiator", and this is always the bone of contention for the "implementer" (teacher), especially if the implementer (teacher) is divorced from the planning and formulation stage of the policy making process.

Another perspective regarding "policy" is that which is put forward by Taylor (1997). Taylor (1997) argues that policy is more than a specific policy document or text, rather it is conceptualised as both process and product, i.e. policy provides both guidelines for implementation and intended outcomes, for which it was designed and developed. Bowe (1992) also expressed a similar argument as Taylor (1997) by stating that the policy process is a cycle, which revolves between three interrelated contexts. The three interrelated contexts are: context of policy text production; context of practice and the context of influence. Ball (1994) has added two more contexts to this cycle, namely; (i) the context of outcomes, which pertains to policy practice measured against the articulated goals of the policy, and the goals of social justice, and (ii) the context of political strategy, which operates in terms of the evaluation of policy practice goals and the goals of social justice.

The issues of policy review, the monitoring of policy and policy evaluation, are also central to an understanding of "policy". According to Ball (1994), policy processes are never complete, as they must be reviewed, evaluated and monitored on an ongoing basis. Fulcher (1998) also believes that knowledge from practice (teacher experiences) must be fed into the review and evaluation of policies, in order to make modifications to the formulation of the policy. Fulcher (1998) so often states that policy processes are often complicated by the reality of them occurring at a number of levels and within a number of arenas, i.e. at a national, provincial, district level and school level. While I concur with Ball (1994) and Fulcher (1998) about the continuous review and modifications of policies, I find it strange that Ball (1994), Harman (1994) Taylor (1997) and Fulcher (1998) are silent on how educational policies should be evaluated,

who should be the sole custodians of the evaluation and monitoring process, and how research could be used to glean data on the effectiveness of the policy and whether the goal and objectives of the policy are being met.

Considering the complex interrelated context of the policy process, Ball (1994: 10) defines policy as "...both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete, in so far as they relate to or map on to the 'wild profusion' of local practice". Ball (1994) makes a distinction between policy as text, and policy as discourse. He argues that policy can be conceived as text, since it allows readers to interpret its formulation in a variety of ways, whilst policy can be also viewed as a discourse that signifies power relations in framing the interpretations of its stipulations.

An analysis of Ball's (1994) definition of policy highlights the value laden nature of policies and the emphasis of the political nature of the policy development process. Ball (1994: 22) further states that "policies embody claims to speak with authority, they legitimate and initiate practises in the world and they privilege certain visions and interests in the world". Therefore, it can be argued that there will always be political struggles and contestations over whose voices will be heard and whose values will be reflected in the formulation of policies.

Having considered Ball (1994), Harman (1994), Taylor (1997) and Fulcher's (1998) view of policy, I argue that the policy making is a process that is always political by nature, and that policies are never neutral and value free. A Policy is initiated due to a perceived problem, and is therefore always goal and object orientated. A policy must articulate the strategies and details of the procedures for achieving the goals and objectives it intends to achieve. I am of the opinion that for policy to be successfully implemented, one has to pay enough attention to the review, monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation.

Goel & Goel (1994) also argue that policy is a process. There are distinct stages in which a policy process unfolds, namely; policy planning, policy initiation, policy formulation, policy implementation, policy monitoring and evaluation. While all these stages in the policy process are important and work systemically, in unison, in this

study I restrict the review of literature to an analysis and discussion of policy implementation, as the research question is concerned with the experiences of grade three teachers in implementing the FFLP, with specific reference to numeracy.

### **2.3. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

According to Paudel (2004), the concept “policy process” was first coined by Pressman and Wildavsky in the early 1970s. Paudel (2004) also contends that Pressman and Wildavsky were the first to consider policy as a “policy process” comprised of various stages, namely; policy planning, policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation. Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), cited in Paudel (2004: 6), describe policy as a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them.

Expanding on the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), Paudel (2004: 17) asserts that policy implementation is the process of “carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing or completing a given task”. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), cited in Paudel (2004), argue that policy implementation encompasses those actions by public and private individuals, or groups that are directed toward achieving the objectives set forth in policy decisions. Paudel (2004: 67) therefore states that policy implementation includes both one-time efforts to transform decisions into operational terms and continuing efforts to achieve the large and small changes mandated by policy decisions.

According to Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983: 20-21), policy implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in legislation, but which can also take the form of important executive orders, or court decisions. The starting point for policy implementation is based on the authoritative decision. This implies centrally located actors, such as politicians, top-level bureaucrats and others (teachers), who are seen as most relevant to producing the desired effects. In their definition, Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983: 20-21), categorize three types of variables affecting the achievement of legal objectives throughout the policy process. These variables can be broadly categorized as; (i) tractability of the problem(s) being addressed; (ii) the ability of the statute (legislation / gazette) to favourably structure

the implementation process; and (iii) the net effect of a variety of political variables on the balance of support for statutory objectives.

O'Toole (2003: 266) defines policy implementation as "what develops between the establishment of an apparent intention on the part of government to do something or stop doing something and the ultimate impact of world of actions". More concisely, he remarks that policy implementation refers to the connection between the expression of governmental intention and the actual result (O'Toole et al., 1995: 43).

Howlett and Ramesh (2003: 13) argue that "as part of policy process, policy implementation concerns how governments put policies into effect". Adamolekun (1983) argues that policy implementation refers to those activities that are carried out in the light of established policies. It refers to the process of converting financial, material, technical and human inputs into outputs that is goods and services (Egonmwan, 1984). Edwards (1980) defines policy implementation as a stage of policy making between the establishment of a policy (such as the passage of a legislative act, the issuing of an executive order, or the promulgation of a regulatory rule) and the consequences of the policy for the people whom it affects. It also includes a wide variety of actions such as issuing and enforcing directives, disbursing funds, making loans, assigning and hiring personnel, etc.

From the definitions and explanations put forward by the above scholars, it has become clear that policy is indeed a process that includes policy implementation as one of the important stages. From the preceding discussion, it became evident that policy planning and policy implementation are interrelated and if the "actors" (teachers) are not involved in the policy planning stage, then policy implementation has no guarantee of succeeding. In essence, policy implementation cannot be analysed separately from policy planning, policy formulation and policy evaluation. However, for the purposes of this study, I have intentionally chosen to focus my discussion and analysis on policy implementation, as I deem it necessary in the case of the implementation of the FFLP.

Having unpacked some of the definitions, interpretations and notions of the concepts "policy", my focus now shifts to the administration of policy implementation. Goel and

Goel (1994: 15) state that “Educational administration is the vehicle which can translate educational policy and planning into action [implementation]”. I concur with Goel and Goel (1994), and, therefore, argue that it is important to initiate a discussion and an analysis of the administration of policy implementation, as it is largely ignored within the South African educational policy landscape. From my own experiences, I have observed that the ineffective administration around policy implementation is in many instances the root cause of policy failure.

In the following section, I focus on two managerial approaches to the administration of policy implementation namely: the top down and the bottom up approaches. In analysing and discussing these two approaches, I draw extensively from the work of (amongst others), Berman (1978), Elmore (1978), Lipsky (1980), March & Saeren (1986), Matland (1995) and Trowler (2003).

## **2.4. APPROACHES TO POLICY ADMINISTRATION**

Educational policies are formulated within various contexts and at various levels, i.e. at central government level, by national statutory bodies associated with the government (such as Umalusi), provincial government level, district level and at an institutional level (schools, colleges, universities, etc). Policies are in essence implemented by individuals and groups within the organizations and levels mentioned above such as in schools, colleges and universities. The aspects of the study of policy administration and management must take into account the implementer of the policy, the monitoring and evaluation of the policy implementation, etc.

Trowler (2003: 124) argues that within the organisational structures, various positions of policy initiation and implementation take place. From his own observation, he notes that many educational landscapes of the world assume a top down approach to policy implementation. The top down approach, as espoused by Trowler (2003), is an approach where policy is initiated at the upper echelons of power, and is filtered down through the educational landscape in an algorithmic manner. According to Elmore (1979: 23), the top down approach begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policy maker’s intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementers at each

level. The top down approach is based on a firmly centralised locus of control, i.e. the control, management and administration of the policy implementation process is directly supervised from the policy initiator (i.e. government, provincial department or school district). Once the policy has been formulated and legitimated at the “top” (for example at government level), it is handed over to the administrative systems (provinces) for execution, where it should be refined and translated into operating instructions down the various levels of the hierarchy.

Trowler (2003) also observed that in some educational landscapes of the world there is a tendency for the “bottom up approach”. This approach is in direct contrast to the top down approach. According to Trowler (2003), there are many instances where policy actors, rather than policy initiators, add value to policy initiation. Trowler (2003: 128) cites teachers as an example, who, he states, are sometimes in the best position to offer solutions, and innovations to problem areas. In these instances, teachers can contribute to policy initiation, and development, to a greater extent than leaders and managers from higher up in the hierarchy, who in many cases are not in touch with the practice based complexities of teaching and learning. I would also like to cite the example of parents and school governing bodies who in some cases have the capacity to contribute meaningfully in curriculum policy issues. However, SGBS within the South African context are prohibited from taking on issues related to curriculum. They are mandated to engage with administrative and governance issues within the school alone.

Having briefly discussed the top down, and bottom up, approaches to policy administration, it has become evident that the top down approach is problematic, in so far as, ensuring effective policy administration. Alvesson (2002), cited in Trowler (2003), stated that in some organisations, there may exist multiple cultures, rather than unitary cultures, which could result in competing sets of values and of understanding, in terms of interpreting the policy. Barret (2004) contends that if the target beneficiaries (viz. teachers) are not allowed to contribute to the formulation of the policies that affect their lives, then implementation is destined for failure. This implies that for policies to be successful they should involve target groups, and that they should allow for an open participatory system, whereby policy makers plan with the people, rather than for the people, in meeting their needs. Such participation will give the target groups a sense

of belonging. Elmore (1979: 603) states that the local service deliverers (viz. teachers) are experts, and have the knowledge of the true problems; therefore, they are in a better position to propose purposeful policies. Elmore maintains, as a result, that the top down approach really stifles innovation and creativity.

Another criticism levelled against the top down approach, as is highlighted by Winter (1995: 28), is that the centralised control within the top down approach is too prescriptive, and largely restricts the attention to actors who are formally involved in the implementation of a specific program. Elmore (1979) also expressed a similar view that the top down approach exhibits a strong desire for rigid prescriptions without any flexibility. The actors (viz. implementers) have no option but to comply rigidly with the prescriptions contained in the policy, irrespective of the environment and context of the policy implementation. I concur with these authors, as I have observed that the top down approach fails to consider the diversity of learners, and learning contexts within which teaching and learning takes place in schools in South Africa. In some instances it requires policies to be modified in order to suit the context of the school. However, in doing so it is important that the content and the intention of the policy is not altered or distorted to a significant degree.

Trowler (2003) points out that the top down approach can also pose implementation challenges resulting from communication lapses, from the initiators to the implementers. He argued that in some instances, the strategies used to communicate the policies to the implementers, in effect, result in changes and distortions to the actual policy. This change in policy stems from the interaction of a multiplicity of actors. Consequently, policy becomes refracted as it is implemented, that is, it becomes “obscured and loses focus of the initial intention and becomes less coherent, as it is interpreted and put into practice by ground level actors, such as teachers”. (Trowler, 2003: 128).

I wholeheartedly agree with both Trowler (2003) and Elmore (1979) regarding the disadvantages and consequences associated with following a top down approach.

The reason for highlighting, and analysing, the top down approach, is that the top down is very much alive within the South African education system. The government initiates

a policy, the provinces ensure that the policy is implemented, and the school districts monitor the implementation of the policy. In contrast to the view taken by Trowler (2003), school districts and schools themselves have virtually no opportunity to “refine and review” policy. Thus, the top down approach becomes too bureaucratic and heavy handed within our education system. The top down approach is highly evident in the National Curriculum Statement, which provides a recipe for what to teach, how to teach and when to teach.

I contend that the most appropriate strategy to policy administration would be a combination of the top down and bottom up approaches. This combination will ensure that all stakeholders within the educational landscape will be afforded the opportunity to contribute to policy development, administration and implementation. Furthermore, the top down administrative approach best describes many policy implementation processes within the South African public school landscape. All administrative systems regarding the policy implementation of the FFLP is centrally controlled by DoE. Provinces and School Districts have very little to no administrative control of the implementation of the FFLP. The resource allocation and distribution is centrally controlled through the DoE system, and as such, Provinces and School Districts cannot intervene directly in cases of administrative need.

Bechard and Prithard (1992), cited in Trowler (2003: 90), argue that for the mixture or combination of top down and bottom up strategy to be effective, leaders at the top, who set the goals within the policy, must “pull the right lever” to ensure that there is commitment from the policy actors to contribute to policy administration in a meaningful way. Trowler (2003: 90) further argues that if this occurs, given the available resources, policy can be successfully implemented with leadership from above, and innovation and best practice from below (i.e. the teachers).

In concurring with Bechard and Prithard (1992), cited in Trowler (2003), I believe that the school management team (SMT) has an influential role, in terms of, creating desired conditions for successful policy administration. The SMT has the leverage to shape the attitudes, values, expectations and behaviours of those involved within the institution. Trowler (2003) contends that a single strong school culture is influential in shaping the behaviour of teachers towards policy implementation, because it provides



them with a context to unite in their actions towards common and agreed goals. On the other hand, when the culture of the school is weak, multiple and conflicting, the implementation of policies is likely to fail. Trowler (2003) argues that schools that have weak, multiple and conflicting cultures are ineffective. Thus, in order for the school management team (SMT) to ensure that policies are successfully transferred into practice, the SMT needs to establish systems within the school that contributes to a strong coherent culture. Trowler (2003) believes that clear policy goals, a strong culture, sufficient resources and an understanding of how to bring about changes can assist school managers to ensure that policy is carried out as intended by policy makers.

From the analysis provided above, it is evident that getting the right mix of top down and bottom up approaches to policy administration is complex. A culture of recognition must be established, which emphasises the value and significance of contributions by the lower level (evident in the bottom up approach) to policy administration. Teachers, and SMT's, for example, must be encouraged to contribute to policy initiation.

## **2.5. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

The success and failure of effective policy implementation depends on a number of factors. Scholars, such as Elmore (1979), Matland (1995) and Giacchino & Kakabadse (2003), have written extensively on some of the factors that contribute to the success and failure of policy implementation. For example, Elmore (1978: 195) identified the following factors, namely; (i) clearly specified tasks and objectives that accurately reflect the intent of policy, (ii) a management or action plan that recommends tasks and performance standards for all the role players involved in policy implementation, (iii) Stakeholder involvement, (iv) an objective means of monitoring and evaluating performance, and (iv) an integrated system of management control and social sanctions to effectively hold subordinates accountable for their performance. Elmore (1978: 195) also argues that failures of implementation are, by definition, lapses of planning, specification and control.

Matland (1995) cited in Hill and Hupe (2002: 75) states that, successful policy implementation hinges on the compliance with legislation, objectives and goals;

achievement of specific success indicators and improvement in the political climate of a program.

Giacchino and Kakabadse (2003) believe that the success of policy implementation is dependent on decisions taken by the project management teams orchestrating the implementation of the policy. They also argue that the decisions taken to locate political responsibility for the policy initiative, presence of strong project management or team dynamics and level of commitment shown to policy initiatives are also key determinants in successful policy implementation. Giacchino and Kakabadse (2003) also identified “local capacity and will” as important factors contributing to the success of effective policy implementation.

Having considered the factors identified by Elmore (1979), Matland (1995) and Giacchino & Kakabadse (2003), I am of the view that the factors influencing the success and failures of policy implementation are complex. The policy process consists of a number of systems, and policy implementation is just one of the component parts of the policy development process. It must be emphasised that an analysis of the policy process must consider a systems view, wherein all parts are viewed as be equal to one another within the policy process.

The factors that influence effective policy implementation are infinite. However, I shall provide an analysis and discussion of a select few factors that contribute to the success and failure of effective policy implementation, namely; (i) Administration and management, (ii) Communication and co-ordination, (iii) familiarity with the educational policy to be implemented, (v) Teacher development and training and (vi) Monitoring and evaluation

The factors above have been listed in order to outline the structure of this section. It must be pointed out that all of the above factors are interrelated, and work in unison to ensure success or failure of policy implementation. Each factor operates systemically with each other, in order to support or impede policy implementation.

The factors are analysed below:

### **2.5.1. Administration and management**

Pfiffner and Presthus, in Goel and Goel (1994: 8), define educational administration as “the organisation and direction of human and material resources to achieve the desired educational ends”. According to Goel and Goel (1994: 76), effective administration can “optimise efficient educational action”, in order to achieve the pre-determined objectives and goals set out in policy documents within the time frames and resource constraints. I am of the opinion that effective administration is the corner stone of successful policy implementation. I concur with Goel and Goel (1994) that for policy action to be effective, there must be a strong administrative system in place. Policy administration is often centralised, and the result is that provincial departments and school districts have very little influence and input into the administration of the policy. This is evident especially when policies and programmes are administered directly from national government. In some policy implementation programmes, such as the FFLP, the administration, provisioning and allocation of resources came under the direct control of the national Department of Education (DoE). Provinces and school districts had limited control over the administration of the FFLP policy, and thus many schools paid the price for the central locus of administrative control. For example, the FFLP included the provisioning of Learner and Teacher Support Materials (LTSM). From my observation, in many instances schools did not receive these LTSM as was promised, and as a consequence, teachers were in some cases unable to implement the FFLP effectively in their schools. Learners also bore the brunt of this anomaly, as they did not receive the learner support materials (work books and work guides) in accordance with the time schedule of delivery contained in the FFLP policy.

Another administrative problem was the issue of unequal allocation of resources based on the quintile ranking of schools. Administratively, all public schools in South Africa are categorised into Quintiles ranging from 1 to 5 (Norms and Standards for Public School Funding, 2000). Quintile 1 schools are schools that are deemed poorest, while Quintile 5 schools are regarded as least poorest. The primary attribute for Quintile ranking is based on the physical location of the school, i.e. schools located in deep rural areas are categorised Quintile 1, while schools located in urban areas are categorised as Quintile 5. One of the major weaknesses of the Quintile ranking system is that, administratively, a school based in an urban area of an affluent suburb may be servicing learners coming from the outlying townships and rural areas. These learners may hail from households who live in abject poverty. However, as long as the school

is in an urban area, the school is regarded as least poor (Quintile 5). Learners from low income groups attending these schools do not benefit from government funded resources, and are, as a result, unfairly disadvantaged.

In concluding this discussion of the administration and management of policy, I draw on the point highlighted by Goel and Goel (1994) when they argue that for policy implementation to be successful there must be an effective administrative system in place. The quality of the administrative system must be such that it is able to provide quick turn – around time for requisitions, requests and distribution of resources (human and physical) when needed at schools.

### **2.5.2. Communication and co-ordination (vertical and horizontal)**

Effective communication and coordination of the policy are essential ingredients to ensure successful implementation of policy. In their studies of policy effectiveness, Pressman and Widavsky (1984), Gunn (1978), Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) and Hood (1976) identified the following key factors that contribute to gaps between policy intent and implementation failures:

- Lack of clear policy objectives; leaving room for differential interpretation and discretion in action;
- Multiplicity of actors and agencies involved in implementation; problems of communication and co-ordination between the “ links in the chain”
- Internal differences between actors and agencies; problems of differing theories and priorities affecting policy interpretations and motivation for implementation.

Therefore, in order to ensure common understanding of the objectives and goals of the policy, both communication and co-ordination need to be on the same wavelength. Those implementing the policy have to possess the same information base, have to interpret it in the same way, and to communicate well with each other. Through communication, requests to implement policies are expected to be transmitted to the appropriate personnel in a clear manner, while such orders must be accurate and consistent. Inadequate information can lead to a misunderstanding, on the part of the

teachers, who may be confused as to what exactly are required of them. In effect, implementation instructions that are not transmitted, that are distorted in transmission, that are vague, or that are inconsistent may cause serious obstacles to successful policy implementation.

Conversely, Edwards (1980) reminds us that directives which are too precise and prescriptive may hinder implementation by stifling creativity and adaptability. Directives and instructions that are too precise and prescriptive do not leave room for teachers to exercise discretion, and flexibility where and when the need for it arises. Consequently, this often leads to gaps in implementation.

Corey (1995: 106-107), argues that when policies are not effectively communicated to teachers and where teachers lack clear understanding of the policy goals, they tend to display resistant behaviour towards the policy. This resistant behaviour to implementing curriculum policies is actually a defensive approach, which can be ascribed to the lack of understanding of the policy itself. It is therefore necessary to market policies in such a way that all stakeholders have a thorough understanding of the policy, especially teachers who are tasked with implementing the policies.

Corey (1995: 23) further points out that there is a direct correlation between “resistant behaviour and anxious behaviour, which can facilitate nuanced understanding of education policy”. Corey (1995) goes on to argue that apart from lack of understanding, some teachers may show an unwillingness to co-operate (rather than overt resistance) when they perceive ineffective leadership, lack of trust or political issues. The construct of attitudes is an important mediating link between the social information we perceive in our environment, and how we respond to it, especially, if stakeholders were not involved in the policy initiation process (Bohner, 2004). In keeping with these thoughts echoed by Bohner (2004), Trowler (2003), maintains that the education manager’s and teacher’s attitude influences the way policy is interpreted, communicated and implemented. Teachers’ attitude not only influence teachers’ behaviour towards policy implementation, but also determines the ways in which teachers process the information related to the policy implementation. Even if teachers were not involved in the policy initiation process, the policy should be marketed so that they can understand the rationale and the need for that particular

policy. Bohner (2004: 13) believes that accepted ways of thinking, and behaving, determine the context into which the new policy flows, and act as a “filter in the policy-implementation process, shaping the interpretation and negotiation of policy”.

In the South African situation it can be argued that effective, collegial support in the form of interventions, workshops, monitoring and evaluating policy implementation by the School Management Team (SMT), and the District Office (DO) is crucial in building capacity and promoting confidence amongst teachers. Teachers must necessarily be exposed to continuous professional development, and become informed, so that they can ensure the effective implementation of policies. Harlen (1999) argues that sound knowledge of policies seems to have a positive effect on planning, assessment, implementation of curriculum and policy. I agree that a comprehensive plan should be put in place regarding teacher capacitation, whenever new policies affecting them are initiated. .

### **2.5.3. STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

Many researchers, such as Goel and Goel (1994), Kelly (1989), Smith (2003) and Pressman and Widavsky et. al. (1984), provide compelling reasons for stakeholder involvement (i.e. National Department of Education, Provinces, Districts, Schools, and Teachers) starting from the initiation stage to the implementation stage to ensure success in the implementation. Goel and Goel (1994) argue that no worthwhile results can accrue if those involved with the planning of the programme, the allocation of resources and the actual operation of the teaching and learning process do not have a thorough understanding of how the policy is to be implemented. By implication, the National Dept of Education has to adopt a more pro-active role, in terms of, mediating policy, allocating resources and evaluating the implementation of the policies. Policy makers need to ensure that the policies are clearly communicated to the teachers especially if teachers were not directly involved in the policy formulation process. This must be followed by regular monitoring and evaluation by the managers (i.e. officials from the Provinces and District Office) in ensuring that policy is being practices appropriately.

Another important stakeholder involvement highlighted by Barber and Fuller (2005) concerns the role of school leadership in policy implementation. They argued that

many policy initiatives fail, because of the lack of appropriate leadership and support. Barber and Fuller (2005) also argue that leadership can be conceived in different ways; however, they found that distributed leadership, and transformational practices found within distributive leadership, augurs well for strong and effective leadership. Distributed leadership assumes a set of practices that are “enacted by people at all levels rather than a set of personal characteristics and attributes located in people at the top” (Goel and Goel, 1994: 279). Barber and Fuller (2005) argue that enabling the development of policy implementation will only have limited impact if transformational practices of setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organization, are not integral parts of the leadership process.

The involvement of teachers as stakeholders in the policy process has been identified by many authors. Pressman and Widavsky (1984) argue that teacher involvement in the planning stages is crucial, since it is during the planning stage that the actual bargaining and negotiations take place between the policy makers, i.e. those seeking to put policy into effect, and the teachers, i.e. those charged with putting policy into action. Pressman and Widavsky (1984) elucidate the afore-mentioned point by further stating that teachers should be part of the planning stage of the policy, as planning and implementation cannot be separated from one another. Goel and Goel (1994) expressed the similar point in stating that, if teachers are involved in the development of the policies and curriculum designs, they will have a better understanding and interpretation of the policies, which will influence their implementation in the classroom in turn. Odden (1991) highlights the significant role of teacher participation in designing policy implementation strategies. Odden (1991) goes on to explain that teacher involvement allows teachers to engage in the overall change process, provides opportunities for teachers to offer key teacher input into designing the specific implementation strategies, and helps to develop teacher commitment to the change effort.

According to Smith (2003: 09), teachers often resist policies especially where they were not involved in the development thereof. She points out that education policy is in the “eye of the beholder and if the beholder has initiated the policy, then it probably is seen as logical, rational and well thought out” (Smith, 2001: 14). Smith (2001: 10) goes on to explain that if the beholder sees policy as “illogical, irrational and improperly

conceived, then there is a strong likelihood that the policy will be resisted, either implicitly or explicitly". When there is stakeholder involvement in policy development, the policy that has been developed becomes less threatening, since stakeholders involved in the process will ensure that the policy is embedded within relevant and contextualised interaction between society, culture, education and power. This will ensure acceptance and willingness to implement the policies.

Smith (2001) further argues that the real impact of policy implementation is an intellectual problem, since most teachers do not receive policy as "empty vessels or naïve readers". It can never be assumed that once policies are initiated, it is implemented as intended. I concur with Smith (2001) as I have observed that many policies are often not implemented, as it was initially intended, simply because the teachers who are the implementers remain in the background while policy makers at provincial and national level produce policy. Although teacher unions may represent them at policy level, teachers' voices are seldom heard.

Huberman and Miles (1984), cited in Odden (1991), pointed out that the top down efforts were more successful than the bottom up initiated change efforts in terms of securing stakeholder commitment for policy implementation. They argued that top administrators (i.e. DoE, Provinces, District officials, SMT) were more often able to involve teachers and obtain their commitment than teachers were able to involve top administrators, and obtain their commitment. Both administrator and teacher commitment are needed for the implementation to succeed.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that if policies are to be successfully implemented, then policy initiation must necessarily involve and illicit input and feedback from a wide stakeholder base within a participatory system, whereby policy makers plan with the people, rather than, for the people in meeting their felt needs. Teachers, as classroom practitioners must be seen as key stakeholders in curriculum policy initiation, as they are able to provide input based on first-hand knowledge and experience.

#### **2.5.4. Understanding the intentions of the policy and the knowledge on how to implement it**



Authors such as McLaughlin (1988), Fullan (1989) and Elmore (1979) argue that the lack of understanding of the intentions of policies is another reason that in many instances hinder the implementation of policies. According to McLaughlin (1991), special programmes, which are intended to be implemented as policies in the classroom are often viewed as constraints, since teachers view them as being incompatible with the realities confronting them on a daily basis. Lack of understanding of the intentions of the policy, results in resistance, which in turn stems from their belief that it adds to the multiple demands and pressures in the classroom (Fullan, 1993). Fullan (1993: 45) further argues that a lack of understanding on how to implement these special programmes can actually diminish the overall operations, because the innovation becomes the focus rather than the more holistic, organic, classroom and school life...innovations become ends in themselves, and paradoxically turn out to be diversions from the more basic goals of improvement". With regard to the FFLP, it was designed and intended to support and guide teachers to enhance and support the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). However, due to a lack of understanding of the policy objectives and goals, I have observed that many teachers view the FFLP as a separate curriculum that has resulted in additional workload, and not as a programme designed to enhance and support the implementation of the RNCS.

Another reason contributing to non-implementation of the policy is the absence of clear guidelines on not only what needs to be implemented, but also on how to go about implementing the policy. Shulman (1987) contends that the blending of content and pedagogy is critical in understanding ways on how to facilitate effective implementation. Many policies do not provide guidance on how to go about blending content with the appropriate methods to be used to facilitate effective teaching. The FFLP, for example, provides the framework on what to teach and prescribes the teaching methods to be used in teaching. However, I have noticed that although these guidelines are provided in Gazette No. 30880, many teachers do not implement the policy as it was intended. Perhaps one of the reasons is that they did not receive any support or in-service training on how to teach numeracy, by using the method of "ability group teaching".

The FFLP does not recognise the fact that not all teachers enjoyed the same level of teacher training under apartheid in South Africa. Prior to 1994, there were designated teacher training colleges for the various race groups (Indians, Coloured, Whites and Blacks). The non-white teacher trainees received inferior teacher training, due to poor funding and access to infrastructure in the teacher training colleges. One cannot, as a result, expect all South African teachers to be equally competent, in so far as, their teacher training is concerned. We tend to continue doing things that we are familiar with. Familiarity provides security, and it is difficult to enter into the unknown. To be willing to implement change, we need to see some meaning and advantage for ourselves in the change. A change could be worthwhile, for instance, if it improves our working conditions, if it will lessen our workload, if it reduces conflict, or if it makes our teaching more interesting.

#### **2.5.5. Teacher development and training**

Teachers need to be empowered in order to cope with the demands involved in implementing a new policy. The kind of development needed is that which will nurture the teachers' scope of involvement in improving teaching and learning. Teachers need to get intensive training, with respect to, understanding the policy requirements, and to develop strategies to deal with the changes posed. Different writers define teacher empowerment in different ways that complement one another. Carl (2002: 4) sees "empowerment" as a process that envisions growth and development and which enables teachers to optimise, not only, the teaching-learning situation, but also their own potential as educators. Empowerment is seen not as an external intervention, whereby something is "done to people", but rather, as a process, in which they are involved and that generates growth and enablement.

According to Odden (1991: 307), for successful policy implementation, there needs to be extensive, intensive, ongoing training and classroom specific assistance for the learning of new instructional strategies. He goes on to argue that the initial stage of training must emphasise awareness of the policy, the specific components of the new knowledge, as well as, the expertise needed for implementation. Odden (1991) suggests that the ongoing assistance should include a variety of actions, such as concrete, teacher specific help, classroom assistance from local staff (SMT, District

Office), teacher observation of similar efforts in different classrooms, schools or districts, and regular project meetings to discuss practical problems. Christie (2001) concurs with Odden (1991), in stating that ongoing assistance is the cornerstone for effective implementation when change in classroom practice is needed to put a new programme in place. Thus it is clear that lack of support hinders policy implementation.

Christie (2001), O' Day (1995), Fuhrman (2001) and Tyler (2008) all agree that there is a strong relationship between a teacher's competency and a teacher's response to educational reforms and policy implementation. Teacher competency relates to the teachers' ability to understand and act on the reforms that policy makers are seeking to implement (Christie, 2001: 135) and therefore if teachers do not have the requisite competencies (regarding curriculum) they will not be able to respond positively to curriculum policy implementation. According to O' Day (1995), "teacher capacity is multidimensional and evolving," and they list four important dimensions of teacher capacity: knowledge, skills, dispositions, and views of self, including self-as-learner. O' Day's (1995) argument holds true for policy implementation to the extent that, teachers cannot be expected to implement policy changes if they do not possess the requisite knowledge and competencies to do so.

Fuhrman (2001) also concurs with O' Day by asserting that teacher capacity is the relationship between teachers' underlying knowledge, access to resources and belief systems which, in turn, affects teachers' response to policy change. For some teachers, implementation moves constantly between the new requirements of the policy and the established conventions and practices of their teaching in the classroom (Jansen, 1998: 211). I concur with Jansen (1998), as I have observed that many teachers are fixated with their established practices and often feel threatened when forced to explore and try out new methods of teaching. The FFLP (Gazette No. 30880: 17), for example, prescribes that group teaching methods are to be used in the teaching of the numeracy lesson. However, I have observed that many teachers are not conforming by using the group method of teaching, as contained in the FFLP Gazette No. 30880. The possible reason could be that these teachers are afraid of trying out something new and are comfortable with their conventional approach to teaching.

The successful implementation of the FFLP in schools, therefore, requires teachers who are competent and are able to respond to curriculum reforms and changes. If teachers lack the necessary competence, then they ought to undergo re-training. Spillane (2000) believes that continuous in-service training contributes to the development of the teacher's confidence, self esteem and knowledge in understanding the policy. Spillane (1999:216) also asserts that teacher collaboration, support groups or communities of practice play an important role in influencing teachers' capacity to change their practice. The concept of clustering schools for the purpose of cluster meetings has beneficial rewards, in terms of, providing opportunities for collaboration, planning together, sharing of good practices, etc.

Fleisch and Shindler (2008: 49) highlight the importance of capacitating teachers, so as to improve classroom practice. They argued that the poor knowledge amongst teachers is one of the key attributes that constrains policy implementation. Although some teachers may want to implement policies, their lack of knowledge of the concepts to be taught creates an impediment to how the policy is to be implemented. For example, the FFLP prescribes that conceptual development must precede problem solving and investigation. Many teachers do not have the capacity to integrate the concept that has been developed with problem solving and may therefore be unable to implement the FFLP as per guidelines.

McLaughlin et. al. (1991) argue that while many reform policies focus on removing or buffering the constraints to effective practice (such as inadequate materials, lack of appropriate teacher preparation, insufficient teacher voice in curriculum decisions), research has shown that removing constraints or obstacles does not by itself ensure efficient practice. For example, a teacher with a reduced work load or with more resources does not necessarily teach better in the classroom. Other factors, such as collegial relations, organisational structures that promotes open communication and feedback, and leadership that recognizes the need for professional growth, are required to facilitate successful implementation of policies. Odden (1991) argues that these factors are not amenable to direct policy fixes, because they do not operate singularly or consistently across all settings.

### **2.5.6. Monitoring and evaluation**

According to Harman (1994), on-going monitoring and evaluation of a programme or policy is necessary to ensure effective implementation. Harman (1994) argues that most policy implementation failures occur as a result of poor policy implementation strategies, which fail to include mechanisms and systems to evaluate and monitor policy implementation. Harman (1994) observed that the evaluation and monitoring of government policies is based on “incidental feedback”, and not on a systematised formal based feedback system embedded within the policy implementation strategy. This observation also holds true for the FFLP policy. The FFLP is a DoE initiative and the administrative control also rests with the DoE. To date, I have not observed or came across any formal requests for feedback regarding the implementation of the FFLP. Neither have I come across any instances where there has been any official monitoring by designated personnel regarding the FFLP. This, in fact, was one of the primary reasons why I chose to investigate this topic. I believe that, to date, there has been no formal research being undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of the FFLP, in so far as, improving the quality of teaching and learning between grades 1 and 6.

Economic support is necessary to ensure effective monitoring of policy implementation. For example, where there is the need to employ staff for the purpose of monitoring, or to acquire resources for similar actions, adequate funding becomes very crucial. Lack of funds will only result in the inability of the policy implementers to function, as they should. Even where there is an ongoing project, if money fails to come up, such a project may become abandoned. In essence, the policy maker must be able to consider the environment, social, economic, political and cultural in which s/he is formulating policies if they are to avoid implementation gaps.

### **2.6. CONCLUSION**

The literature review highlighted the fact that policy implementation is a dynamic process and that there is no recipe to ensure effective policy implementation. Effective policy implementation is dependent on a number of contextual factors such as communication, co-ordination, administration, management, stakeholder involvement in the policy process, familiarity with the policy to be implemented, understanding the

will of the policy implementer, monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation. Each of these factors is interrelated and operates systemically to ensure success in policy implementation. Policy implementation failure is often the result of ignoring or de-emphasising anyone of these factors in the policy process.

Of all the factors discussed in this chapter, it is my contention that the administration and management of policy implementation is an area of focus that ought to be prioritized within the South African public school educational policy environment. It is not good practice that policy implementation of some policies such as the FFLP is government controlled and administered and managed centrally from Pretoria (the administrative capital of South Africa). It is my contention that provinces should be given full responsibility, like in all other instances, to drive the implementation of the FFLP policy. The distribution of resources (LTSM) to schools should also become the responsibility of the Provinces and not of the DoE, as this poses huge logistical challenges for the distribution of the resources. The administration and management of policy implementation should, therefore, be the sole domain of provinces. However, the national government should have oversight of the policy implementation through national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. This could also involve thorough research on the progress and effectiveness of the policy implementation, and whether or not the desired goals and intention of the policy have been met or achieved.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Methods**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

According to Guba & Lincoln (1989: 23), each individual has a “basic set of beliefs” or a paradigm that guides their actions. These beliefs, in turn, shape how they see the world and act in it. In the sphere of research too, researchers are always guided by a particular philosophical framework which determines the design, methods and methodology they use when conducting research. In addition, the choices of design, methods and methodology are also influenced by the aim of the study they are undertaking. In this study, the aim of the inquiry was to gain an understanding of the experiences of a sample of grade three numeracy teachers in implementing the FFLP. I was interested in closely examining the words, opinions and feelings of these participants in order to understand the situation as they experienced it (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 2) in a sense gaining the insider’s view or the “emic” perspective, as is referred to by Merriam (1998: 6-7).

My philosophical framework for this study is grounded within an interpretive paradigm. Interpretive inquiries aim to characterize how people experience the world, the way they interact together, and the settings in which these interactions take place (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 8). The study can be characterised as a generic qualitative study, as described by Merriam (2002). According to Merriam (2002: 11), generic qualitative research “simply seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved”.

I opted for the generic qualitative research design, because it allowed me the opportunity to gather data from the sample population in their natural setting within the school. Generic qualitative research also afforded me the opportunity to meet face-to-face with the participants via interviews in order to gain an understanding about their lived experiences regarding the implementation of the FFLP. According to Henning,



et.al. (2004: 31), “Generic qualitative research is fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand social members’ definitions and understanding of situations”. Generic qualitative research underpins the notion that knowledge is constructed, not only, by observable phenomena, but also, by people’s beliefs, values, perceptions, reasons, meaning making and self understanding (Henning et al. 2004: 20). The sentiments echoed by Henning et al (2004) also swayed me into following a generic qualitative research design, as I sought to glean data concerning teacher’s experiences, and qualitative research lends itself to strike a rapport with the participants. This proved valuable in establishing trust and gaining confidence with the respondents as well.

Having considered Merriam’s (2002), Henning et. al.’s (2004), and Marshall’s & Rossman’s (1995) perspectives advocating the use of generic qualitative research, I was convinced that generic qualitative research was best suited for study. The generic qualitative research approach allowed me to identify, explore, analyse, extract and understand “the meaning teachers have constructed or how they make sense of the FFLP and the experiences they have of the FFLP in so far as implementation is concerned” (Merriam, 1998: 6). I observed that grade three teacher’s perceptions and experiences of the implementation of the FFLP have been problematic. By analyzing their experiences, clarity could be sought as to what promotes or impedes their implementation of the FFLP.

The purpose, aim and rationale of this study also required that I serve as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, so that I could be “sensitive to the underlying meaning when gathering, collecting and analysing the data” (Merriam, 1998: 1).

### **3.2. SAMPLING**

Given the qualitative approach and the focus of the research towards gaining an understanding of the experiences of teachers in implementing the FFLP, “purposive sampling” was used to select participants who would serve as “information-rich cases” (Merriam, 1998: 61; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 45; Patton, 1990: 169-172). Patton (1990) differentiates a number of different types of purposive sampling. For the

purpose of this study, I chose to use the maximum variation sampling, in order to choose such information rich cases. According to Patton (1990: 164), through these cases “one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the theme”. Maximum variation sampling allowed me to purposively select a sample of grade three teachers, who were representative of the widest range of experience on the problem under investigation (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 57) in order to identify important themes and patterns that cut across such a range of variation (Patton, 1990:182).

The first step in my sampling strategy was to seek permission from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to undertake this research (See Appendix A). Once permission has been granted I, then, followed step two, which was a request for a list of all the schools within the Ekurhuleni South District from the District Information Systems Management Sector (DISMS). This list provided me with the names of the schools categorised under the five different quintile rankings i.e. from the poorest to the least poor. Step three involved selecting the five schools. I used the convenience sampling method to select one school from each of the five quintiles. The criteria for the convenience sampling method was based on the proximity of these five schools from the place of my residence, i.e. I chose the school closest to my home from each of the 5 quintiles. I am in full-time employment and, thus, time is a huge factor especially since public schools close between 2h30 and 15h00 and it proved difficult to interview teachers after 15h00. Step four involved the selection of the Head of Department (Foundation Phase) and a grade three teacher from each of the five schools. I ensured that each Head of Department and teachers teaching grade three in the last two years were selected for the sample. In one instance, the HOD was not selected as she last taught grade three, four years ago and I, therefore, felt that input from this HOD will have no bearing on my study, as the FFLP was launched in 2008 (under four years ago). In order to select the teacher component for my sample, I used the criteria of experience (i.e. number of years teaching experience in grade three) and whether or not the teacher was currently teaching grade three. These two criteria made it easy for me to select the teacher component for my sample. In one school there were only two units of grade three (i.e. the HoD was teaching one unit and a level one teacher was teaching the second unit). In the other four schools, I chose the teacher component based on the highest number of years teaching experience in grade three and if they were currently teaching grade three.

### 3.3. DATA COLLECTION

According to Maykut & Morehouse (1994: 76), the data of qualitative inquiry is most often “people’s words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour”. From the various ways of gathering data qualitatively, namely; participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of documents, I chose in-depth interviews “which moves beyond surface talk to a rich discussion of thoughts and feelings” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 80) for this research.

Here are various forms of in-depth interview designs that can be used to obtain thick, rich data using a qualitative investigational perspective (McMillan et al, 2010; Patton, 1990; Kvale 1996 and Cresswell, 1999). McMillan, *et al* (2010) argue that in-depth interviews vary in the degree of structure, planning, and comparability of the responses in data handling and thus the researcher must be weary of following strict protocol when analysing the data from in-depth interviews. Bryman (1999) is of the opinion that the purpose of gathering response in-depth interviews is to enable the researcher to understand and explore the points of view of the participants without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of question categories. Based on this argument by Bryman (1999), I, the researcher, posed one overarching question to the participants, namely; “tell me about your experiences in implementing the FFLP in numeracy”.

After having piloted my interview with Monica (who was finally included in my sample), I realised that I needed to be mindful of the importance of probing as my pilot interview with Monica did not yield sufficient information rich data. I, therefore, had to support the main question that I posed with probing and clarifying questions. According to Niewenhuis, cited in Kobus (2007: 88), the three probing strategies, namely; detail oriented probes, elaboration probes and clarification probes are used to obtain the maximum amount of data, and to verify whether what has been heard is actually what the person has meant. I made use of some of the following probing questions when the participants’ responses needed clarity:

- Talk briefly about your thoughts, feelings and sentiments about the FFLP
- What do you enjoy most about the FFLP?
- To what extent would you say that the FFLP has changed your teaching methods or teaching styles in numeracy?
- If you had to review the FFLP, what are some of the changes you would make and what are some of the things you would not change?

I was mindful of Patton's (1990) suggestion and ensured that the following six types of questions were included when probing, namely; (i) experience or behaviour probes; (ii) opinion/ value probes; (iii) feeling probes; (iv) knowledge probes; (v) sensory probes and (vi) background/demographic probes.

Although I did not have predetermined questions planned for the interview, I, nevertheless, had prepared an interview guideline that contained various cues to remind me of the overarching question at hand. I found that the interview probes were particularly useful in "eliciting elaboration of detail, further explanations and clarification of responses" (McMillan, 2010: 359). Some of the probes I used where the following: Not included

McMillan et al (2010) argues that "effective planning and preparation maintains an unambiguous focus and helps to provide maximum benefit to the research study". Having considered the argument set forth by McMillan et al (2010), I ensured that from the onset of the interview, I explained to each participant the purpose and the focus of the research, the terms of confidentiality and the format of the interview so that I could obtain relevant, pertinent and appropriate feedback from the participants. After the interview, participants were reminded that the summary of their feedback shall be forwarded to them, in order to undertake "member checking", i.e. to verify that their intended meaning is appropriately captured in the transcripts.

### **3.4. DATA ANALYSIS**

Silverman (2000: 119-122 and 135-136) states that data analysis should begin from the moment you start your research, and that it should continue up to the final report writing. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim in dialogue form.

To protect the identity of the participants each one was allocated a pseudonym. These transcripts were, then, analysed for recurring themes and patterns using the “constant comparative method” of data analysis, as put forth by (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 126- 144; and Merriam, 1998: 155- 197). This process is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

### **3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Stake (in Merriam, 1998: 214) refers to qualitative researchers as “guests in the private spaces of the world” and that their “manners should be good and their ethics strict”. Based on Stake’s argument (in Merriam, 1998: 214), I deliberately chose a personal code of ethics based on the list of provisions provided by Patton (1990: 356) for use during the research process and more especially during the interviews.

To ensure an ethical study before the enquiry, I requested the necessary permission, in writing, from the Gauteng Department of Education, to conduct the study with teachers from the Ekurhuleni South District (see Appendix A). Permission was then granted (see appendix F) subject to a number of conditions all of which I complied with. I then informed the principal that I was undertaking research at their schools (see Appendix B). After identifying the participants, I then handed out letters of consent to the selected teachers requesting their participation in the research with clear indications of my intentions to conduct interviews with them. In order to achieve informed consent the teachers were provided a form informing them of the purpose of the research, and that they could terminate their participation, at any time, with no penalty, and a full disclosure of any risks associated with the study. The teachers were requested to sign the consent form (Appendix C) indicating that they understand the research and were willing to participate. The participants were given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity; and the intended use of the data was described to them. In ensuring full disclosure, participants were informed about all aspects of the study. I also ensured participants confidentiality by making certain that the data obtained during the interviews were not linked to individual subjects by name.

### 3.6. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Having addressed the ethical considerations in this study, this section addresses the issue of trustworthiness (validity and reliability) of the study as Merriam (1998: 189) contends “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner”, In terms of, maintaining validity for this study; I followed the standards based model advocated by Eisenhart and Howe (1992). Eisenhart and Howe (1992: 31) propose five standards for maintaining validity in qualitative research. According to Eisenhart and Howe (1992: 31), validity in qualitative research refers to “trustworthiness of inferences that are drawn and made from data”. The five standards advocated by Eisenhart and Howe (1992: 31) are as follows:

- Standard 1 (S1): Fit between research questions, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques
- Standard 2 (S2): Effective application of specific data collection and analysis techniques
- Standard 3 (S3): Alertness to and coherence of prior knowledge
- Standard 4 (S4): Value constraints
- Standard 5 (S5): Comprehensiveness

Regarding S1, I ensured that there was methodological congruency and alignment between the research question and the research approach and methods. My research question for this study was: How do grade three teachers experience the implementation of the FFLP regarding numeracy? In order to ensure that relevant data is gleaned, I purposively selected an appropriate sample consisting of teachers who have current and relevant grade three teaching experience. I also ensured that the sample selected had a fairly reasonable background and knowledge of the FFLP and that the sample allowed for variety in terms of schools (different quintiles). I consciously employed in-depth interviews as my data collection method in order to meet face to face with the participants. I felt that meeting face to face with the participants will increase the quality of the data I gleaned as I could use probing questions where I needed clarity from the participant's responses.

Eisenhart and Howe (1992) state that S2 is about ensuring that credible reasons are used in the motivation of selecting a particular sample population, data gathering procedures and data analysis techniques. In keeping with this standard, I ensured that the basic principles of undertaking in depth interviews were followed. For example, the interviews were conducted at a date, time and venue that was suitable for the interviewees. All the interviewees were given adequate notice of the interview, no interviewee was coerced into participating in the study. Interviewees were free to exit the study whenever they wished to. The interviewees were assured that their names and the names of their school will not be divulged under any circumstance. Before the interview could begin, each interviewee was reminded that the interview will be recorded. During the interviews, I ensured that interviewees were given adequate time to respond to the question. In instances where there were long pauses, I used probes to get interviewees to respond to pertinent issues where I felt that clarity was needed. After the interview, I ensured that each interview was transcribed. The transcription was forwarded to the respective interviewee to verify that what is contained in the transcript is a true reflection of their thoughts and experience. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) refer to this process as “member checking”

According to Eisenhart and Howe (1992), S2 is also about ensuring that the data analysis process yields “low inference” conclusions. In adhering to this standard, I followed the constant comparative method which is based on comparing, aggregating, contrasting, sorting and ordering data into units (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The units were further aggregated and coded until themes and categories emerged. This deep level of abstraction allowed for low inferential conclusions as I reported and analysed themes based directly on the data that was gleaned from the participants. In no instance did I engage in reporting on my subjective experiences and observations.

Eisenhart and Howe (1992) explain S3 within the context of the researcher being alert and having a coherent understanding and repertoire of prior knowledge. In keeping with this standard, I was mindful of the suggestion and advice offered by Roman (1989), cited in Eisenhart and Howe (1992: 652), who argues that the “researcher should hold their own views in abeyance to permit the emergence of the insiders perspective and the inductive development of the findings to explain and extend the results from a specific case or group”. This was valuable advice that I followed

throughout the study in so far as adhering to the principle of objectivity in research. While I developed many assumptions after having undertaken literature review, I ensured that the findings were linked to the literature review, deliberately guarding against subjectivity from my part.

With regard to S4, Eisenhart and Howe (1992) identify two types of value constraints, namely external and internal constraints.

According to Eisenhart and Howe (1992: 660), external value constraints concern whether the research is valuable for informing and improving educational practice. Regarding external constraints, I have endeavoured to provide in this -report, a detailed and comprehensive expose of the research context, processes, findings and recommendations, thereby making it possible for others (practitioners, teachers, educational policy specialists, School Principals, Foundation Phase Head of Departments, School District Officials) to understand the context and how grade three teachers are currently experiencing the implementation of the FFLP specifically to numeracy.

Eisenhart and Howe (1992: 660) describe internal value constraints “as the way in which research is conducted with emphasis on the research subjects (sample population)”. They argue that internal value constraints refer to research ethics which is fundamental to improve and ensure trustworthiness. I have discussed ethical considerations applied in this study in section 3.5. in this chapter.

Eisenhart and Howe (1992) provide a complex explanation of how to maintain S5 (comprehensiveness) in research. Firstly, they argue that S5 must be maintained for S1-S3. This entails ensuring that there is overall theoretical and technical quality. In terms of maintaining S5 for S1-S4, the researcher must ensure a balance of the overall technical quality, the value of the study and the risks involved in the study. In terms of S5 (S1-S3), I took care to ensure that the theoretical and technical quality is of a high standard.

In terms of S5 (S1-S4), I provide a discussion around the value of this study, who it will benefit and how the benefits can be achieved. The research findings are explained



methodologically and the recommendations provided are aligned to each of the findings. In this way, I believe that all stakeholders involved in the formulation, design and implementation of the FFLP can benefit meaningfully from the experiences of teachers as analysed in this study. The recommendations are also explained logically in terms of suggesting practical solutions to make the implementation of the FFLP successful and effective.

In terms of reliability, I followed the suggestion offered by Guba and Lincoln (cited in Merriam, 2002: 27), i.e. the researcher should think of reliability as “consistency or dependability”. This means that the researcher must be convinced and ensure that the data collected makes sense and that the data gleaned is relevant and pertinent to the research objectives and questions that the study seeks to investigate. Guba and Lincoln (cited in Merriam, 2002: 27) also assert that the findings and results should be dependable in terms of its appropriateness, authenticity and alignment with the data collected. Guba and Lincoln (cited in Merriam, 2002: 27) therefore believe that it is not entirely necessary to place emphasis on yielding the same results if the study is replicated but rather emphasis should be placed on the dependability and consistency of the results and findings that emanate from the research.

In order to increase consistency and dependability in this study, I utilised two strategies as proposed by Merriam (2002: 29), namely the investigators position and an audit trail. Firstly, in terms of my position, I declared and stated my assumptions and presuppositions at the beginning of this study. Secondly, I provided a clear audit trail (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994 and Merriam, 2002: 27). Lincoln and Guba (cited in Merriam, 2002: 27) state that the audit trail can assist independent judges to authenticate the findings of the study by following the trail of the researcher. This was achieved by:

- Providing an example of an original transcript of the audio taped in-depth interview (see appendix E)
- Providing an example of the unitised data and provisional categories (see table....) which were compiled in accordance with the constant comparative method of data analysis as set out by Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 124-126)

### **3.7. CONCLUSION**

This study is a generic qualitative inquiry situated within an interpretative paradigm. A non-probability sampling framework was used to select the samples for this study. The convenient sample method was used to select the five schools, whereas the purposive sampling method was used to select the two teachers from each of the five schools. In-depth interviews were used to glean data from the sample population. The constant comparative method was used to analyse the data. This chapter concludes with an explanation of how the five standards of trustworthiness, as advanced by Eisenhart and Howe (1992) were maintained in this study.

The next chapter (Chapter 4) provides the data presentation and analysis of this study.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Data Analysis and Data Presentation**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the method of data analysis, namely, the constant comparative method, was discussed. The primary purpose of this chapter is to show how I analysed the data, so as to present the results that were gleaned. I will also explicate the research findings by using excerpts from the data. The purpose of analysing the data was to “bring order, structure and meaning to the mass [of] collected data” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995: 111) in order to obtain answers to the research question namely: How do grade three teachers experience the implementation of the FFLP in numeracy?

#### **4.2. DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis, according to Merriam (1998: 178), is “the process of making sense out of the data”. For the purpose of this study, I chose the constant comparative method of data analysis (Maykut and Morehouse 1994: 126-144; Merriam, 1998: 155-197). The basic strategy of this approach is to “constantly compare bits of data with each other” (Merriam, 1998: 179) to determine if they have something in common. Comparison leads to provisional categories that are again compared to each other, resulting in a search for recurring patterns in the data.

According to Merriam (1998: 180), it is “important to do data analysis in conjunction with data collection”. In considering the suggestion advanced by Merriam (1998: 180), I started the process of transcribing the data, and, thereafter, immediately unitising the data. I found this process very rewarding, since it afforded me the opportunity of becoming familiar with the data before embarking on the analysis. I continued with this process until all ten of the interviews were conducted. Once each of the interviews was transcribed, I coded all the data pages (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 127) to make it easier to identify the source of the data. I coded each page of the transcript at the top right hand corner with a specific code. The transcript code for each of the pages was as follows: the Pseudonym (name of the interviewee) followed by the page number of the particular data set (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 128). For example the code Monty/2 refers to the transcription of the interview with Monty, while 2 refers to the page number of the transcript.

After having transcribed the interview, I began to unitise the data. I unitised the data electronically by using the “Review function – New Comment” embedded in the Microsoft Office Word 2000 software. Each chunk of data, paragraph, word or sentence that contained new meaning was unitised using the “New Comment” function. The “New Comment Function” automatically inserted a “text box” on the right hand margin with a line pointing to the chunk, word, sentence or paragraph. I found this method very useful as the “New Comment” function:

- Allowed me to type in a word or phrase highlighting the essence of the unit’s meaning (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994: 129)
- Automatically listed the number of the unit. See example below:

Mes: Teachers were not able to keep up with the pace of teaching. There are too many activities per day. Some of the learners are very weak; they cannot cope with the activities in the lessons. Sometimes the teacher just cannot teach all of the concepts because of contextual problems. So during class visits, when your lesson presentation does not correlate with your lesson plan, then you are penalised.

Comment  
[U2]  
FFLP file is  
not useful

- Highlighted the word, sentence or paragraph’s unit of meaning from the transcript (data)

After having unitised all ten interviews, I went on to compile a “discovery sheet” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 133). I used the “copy” and “paste” function from MS Word to compile my discovery sheet, electronically. Each unit was coded once again (as the “New Comment” function could not automatically insert the name of the interviewee).

An example of the new unit code used in the discovery sheet was as follows:

Monty 2/U3 – The name of the interviewee and page number of the transcript /unit number in the transcript.

After having copied and pasted the unitised data of all ten transcripts onto my discovery sheets, I began the process of linking the emerging words, phrases, concepts, ideas to find common, categories and sub categories. From the first interview transcript, approximately 8 provisional categories emerged. The following are some of the provisional categories that emerged:

- Need for workshops and in-service training

- Language barriers
- A structured programme with clear guidelines
- Lack of support from school
- Lack of support from District
- Confusion between ability group teaching and group work
- Misunderstanding of the programme
- Lack of monitoring systems

I, then, began placing the coded units into these provisional categories using the “look/feel alike criteria” described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 37). I continuously used the “look/feel alike” criteria to compare the units of meaning to the other provisional categories. Data that did not fit in with the provisional categories were placed in a separate category.

After having about seven units of meaning in a category, I re-read these units of meaning to distil the meaning in order to be able to write a “rule of inclusion”, which would serve as a basis to include or exclude subsequent units in the category (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 139). Lincoln and Guba (in Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 139) suggest writing the rule of “inclusion in the form of a propositional statement, which conveys the meaning contained in the data collected under a category name”.

I developed “rules for inclusion” for each of the provisional categories, in order to ensure that the units were relevant and applicable before being copied and pasted under each provisional category. I used the rule of inclusion as the basis for incorporating the relevant data for the category. I continued using the method described above in analyzing the rest of the interviews. The analysis of all the data I obtained from this process, continued in this way until there was no longer any data left. Table 4.1 is an excerpt from a provisional category. It includes the rule of inclusion, the applicable units of meaning and notes to aid further exploration.

The full text of each of the provisional categories and sub categories can be found in Table 4.1 below.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Experiences of teachers, pertaining to training and development:</b>         | <p><b>Rule for inclusion:</b> <i>For the FFLP to be effectively implemented, both teachers and School Management Teams need to attend workshops, and in service training, so that they can understand how to implement the FFLP, in order to achieve its intended purpose.</i></p>   |
| <p>Lack of training amongst teachers influenced the implementation of FFLP:</p> | <p><b>Charls 2/U10:</b><br/>It would probably make implementation easier if there was training at the appropriate time for all teachers. When I looked at the files, there were pages and pages of printing. I looked at the files and said “I don’t have the time to go and sit, and study them”. There is just no time to do that. So I had to force myself to get to read that file. I then tried to make sense of it through my own reading and interpretation. We had not had a visit from the District office to check if we were implementing it the right way. So from the District side we had not had any contact. Being a cluster representative I had been on meetings with the Numeracy clusters. Up until now we don’t know exactly how it is to be implemented. I am interested to know whether we are teaching the right way or not.</p> <p><b>Mes 2/U3:</b><br/>I wish that someone could provide a workshop on how to use the files. It would make it so much easier. I feel that it would be nice if only the District could look at providing rigorous in-service training to capacitate teachers. Teachers must also be told that this is a programme that they have to follow and they have no option but to implement the programme, whether they like it or not. Monitoring tools based on the FFLP to be used at school level and District level should be developed by the District.</p> <p><b>Mag 2 /U12:</b><br/>There was no support. When I asked my colleagues how they were doing group work, they were just as confused. They would say “I’m struggling. I still don’t know what to do”. Everyone was teaching by trial and error. Sometimes I think at least if someone could show us how to teach the way we are supposed to teach, then we will know how to teach. What is put onto paper theoretically is not easy to practice. Even if someone explains to you how to divide your groups, is not easy to understand. It actually sounds chaotic. You can only understand if someone shows you, practically, how it is to be done.</p> <p><b>Mag 1/U4:</b><br/>So much has changed since we were trained at the college as teachers. Now we are expected to teach something totally different in a new way, not like the way we were trained.</p> |

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|   | <p><b>Sam 4/U19:</b><br/>I have not attended any workshops/ cluster meetings. I don't know whether the HoD has attended. But we got no feedback from her. I attended only one cluster meeting just to receive the files.</p>   |
| Influence of training on the teacher confidence in the classroom:   | <p><b>Monty2/U16:</b><br/>There was no training. It is through trial and error that I taught myself how to work through the programme. I am not always sure whether I am doing it the correct way, but I am trying my best. So much has changed since we were trained at the college, as teachers. Now we are expected to teach something totally different in a new way, not like the way we were trained.</p> <p><b>Mag1/U4:</b><br/>We were never taught, for example, how to do group work. We were trained to teach using the whole class method. Now I am expected to do group work, but I am not sure how. I never even attended OBE training. If I attended OBE workshops I would have understood what group work requires. The first time I learnt how to do group work was when I was appointed at a LSEN school.</p>  |
| The workshops and in-service training related to content knowledge and methodology influenced the implementation of the FFLP: | <p><b>Charles 5/U22:</b><br/>We need support on how to use the resources recommended in the gazette, and how to teach with resources. No matter how much resources are available, without the necessary skills and knowledge on how to use the resources, the concepts will not be effectively taught.</p> <p><b>Mes 3/U23:</b><br/>The problem at our school is that many of the teachers are not FP trained. They are Intersen (Intermediate and Senior phase) trained teachers. They need a lot of support, especially, with the teaching methodologies and content knowledge. As a grade co-ordinator I experienced lots of frustration in having to show the teachers not only what to teach, but also how to teach. I felt that it was not my job to train teachers how to teach. This should be the responsibility of the District.</p> <p><b>Sib2/U13</b><br/>The District has conducted some workshops on concepts like mental maths. And counting. But the workshops were not directly for FFLP. But now I can put the workshops together like a puzzle.</p> |



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|   | <p><b>SUE3/U8:</b><br/>As a cluster leader I attended many workshops that were arranged by the District. These workshops were very useful as they were presented by service providers. The District has conducted some workshops on concepts like mental maths and counting. But none of these workshops were directly for FFLP. But now I can put the workshops together like a puzzle and I have a better understanding of the FFLP. I am able to use the knowledge I gained at those workshops to implement the FFLP lesson plans. I now see that the FFLP is nothing new, but gives you more structure to your teaching.</p> <p><b>Charles 6/ U21:</b><br/>As a HOD I have noticed that teachers need support on how to use resources, that is, how to teach with resources. No matter how much resources are available, without the necessary skills and knowledge on how to use the resources, the concepts will not be effectively taught. A knowledge challenged teacher or ability challenged teacher who themselves had to learn how to multiply, how to divide.... they could not understand basic story sums: I think that some teachers need to go for long sessions of workshops to help them with their abilities to calculate, to solve a problem. I've seen these challenges amongst our teachers. There would be a great improvement in the standards if those teachers attend a workshop that is about two to three weeks of duration where they are taught and tested, taught and tested.... thereby sorting out their basic skills. Then workshop them on the material we want them to use to assist them teach i.e. how the files work, what the milestones intends to achieve, what the benefits are, how to implement them in the classroom. Then send them back to teach. From the District level, visit those teachers, go and look what they are doing in their classrooms, identify the problems they still have. Then have a follow up workshop with them. Attending a workshop of two to three hours duration will not solve their problems.</p> |
| The need for SMT training and empowerment in order to | <p><b>Mes 3/U8:</b><br/>At my school, there is often very little compliance with Districts request as the Principal has the final say. My principal lacks understanding of the way FP learners learn. She imposes many of the Intersen ideas onto FP teaching. This does not work. Decisions are taken at the SMT meeting and given as instructions to follow. There is absolutely no opportunity for discussion.</p>  |

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| <p>support and monitor FFLP implementation:</p> | <p>Perhaps if the HOD's are fully capacitated, they would be able to convince the Principal to make the decisions in the best interest of the learners. If the principal is knowledgeable about FP curriculum, she will indeed have a better understanding of how learners learn. Then maybe she will not put pressure on us as teachers to force the teaching of concepts onto learners for which they are not ready.</p> <p><b>Monty 3/U13:</b><br/>I think that would really make a difference least if the SMT could attend training on the implementation of the FFLP. The HOD herself is unsure of the need and also how to implement the FFLP according to the Gazette. If the HoD's are fully capacitated, they would be able to convince the Principal to make the decisions in the best interest of the learners. If the principal is knowledgeable about FP curriculum, she will indeed have a better understanding of how learners learn. Then maybe she will not put pressure on us as teachers to force the teaching of concepts onto learners, for which they are not ready.</p> <p><b>Mag 3/U9:</b><br/>In terms of understanding the files, support was nonexistent. I was just given the files by the HoD. I had to make meaning of the files on my own. I believe if there were a workshop to unpack the files, it would have helped.</p> <p><b>Mes3/U13:</b><br/>The Intermediate phase HoD felt that the standard of the lesson plans in the FFLP files were not adequate to prepare the learners for grade 4. They also stated that the grade fours were not implementing FFLP, as they found that there were many gaps. The files that they had received from the department were still unopened in boxes lying in trolleys. It is sad to see what wasteful expenditure this is. I haven't seen a single teacher use the file even as a resource. This was another reason why we had to stop implementing the FFLP.</p> <p><b>Ana 4/U19:</b><br/>If the HOD's are fully capacitated, they would be able to convince the Principal to make the decisions in the best interest of the learners. If the principal is knowledgeable about FP curriculum, she will indeed have a</p> |
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|   | <p>better understanding of how learners learn. Then maybe she will not put pressure on us as teachers to force the teaching of concepts onto learners, for which they are not ready.</p> <p><b>Monty 2/U11:</b><br/>We were just given the FFLP files and told to teach according to the files. Many teachers did not take the time to read and understand the files. They saw it as an opportunity to escape from doing lesson plan preparations. But it was only during the class visits and book control by the management, that it was discovered that teachers were neither using the FFLP lesson plans nor their own plans in teaching. The principal met with all the FP teachers and provided a feedback of her observation. She stated that there was no evidence of planning and preparation taking place. Teachers were not even using the resources that were suggested in the files in their teaching. Therefore, it was the decision of the SMT to suspend the use of the FFLP files and that all teachers do their own planning using the NCS policy document to cover the necessary LO's and AS's.</p> <p><b>Mes 1/U6:</b><br/>Within the grade threes, implementation appeared to be problematic. It was discovered by the management i.e. the principal during her class visits and by the HoD during appraisal that not all teachers were teaching according to the lesson plans in the files. They picked up many inconsistencies in its use such as not teaching according to the plans. This is what they were checking for during class visits.</p> <p><b>Ana: 3/U18:</b><br/>My principal lacks understanding of the way FP learners learn. She imposes many of the Intersen ideas onto FP teaching. This does not work. Decisions are taken at the SMT meeting and given as instructions to follow. There is no opportunity for discussion</p> <p><b>Sam1/U6:</b><br/>Our HoD asks us to do something else from the Milestones as she says we must not follow everything in the milestones document. We must concentrate on bonds and tables. I like the milestones document but our HoD causes confusion</p> |
| The influence of District monitoring at schools | <b>Lyn 4/U17:</b>  |

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|   | <p>Since my school was identified as an underperforming (based on the result of the previous year's common assessment set by the District as well as the ANA- School achieved below 50% average), the District office visit us often. They check if we are teaching according to the lesson plans in the files. They have visited us three times this year. They also check the learners books, and give us suggestions</p> <p><b>Charl4/U20:</b><br/>We had not had a visit from the District to check if we were implementing it the right way. So from the District side we had not had any contact. Up until now we don't know exactly how it is to be implemented. I am interested to know whether we are teaching the right way or not.</p>   |
| Lack of support and training from the District increased teacher collaboration at schools | <p><b>Mes 3/U11:</b><br/>We have grade meetings at least once a week so that there is common understanding. This helped as teachers got together and shared their understanding of what needed to be done. The more experienced teachers served as grade co-ordinators and they assisted new teachers. The problem at our school is that many of the SGB employed teachers are not FP trained. They are intersex trained teachers who were not coping with teaching in the intersex phase. The principal was of the opinion that it is easier for them to teach in the FP. The FP became the dumping ground. They need a lot of support especially with the teaching methodologies. As a grade co-ordinator I experienced lots of frustration in having to show the teachers not only what to teach, but also how to teach. I felt that it was not my job to train teachers how to teach. As the term became busier, time was a problem that prevented teachers from having the regular grade meetings. It was extra mural duties, attending staff meetings, attending cluster meetings, then the problems marking of learner's books, etc. It was just getting impossible. That resulted in implementation problems.</p> <p><b>Lyn 1/U 7:</b><br/>We also discuss our lessons amongst colleague's .We support each other for example when we have to translate from English to isiXhosa as the medium of instruction is is-Xhosa and all the teacher support materials are in English.</p> <p><b>Sue 3/U9:</b></p> |

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|  | <p>I can say that they are all trying their best. As I have said every Tuesdays, we meet as a phase. We read through the milestones and lesson plans, discuss it together, and show one another the ways to tackle these problems. I can say that they are doing their best. In our preparation days, we encourage our colleagues to ask for help and to help one another. New teachers have mentors, who are paired together, discuss over breaks, visit classes to observe lessons.</p> |
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**Table 4.1: Excerpt from a provisional category (need for support and monitoring in the implementation), with units of meaning, the rule for inclusion and the responses of the participants.**

After all the units of data were categorised, I began to systematically review the categories by constant testing, checking and exploration to identify any ambiguities and overlaps. Using this process, some of the categories and rules were re-defined and re-adjusted. Through the process of reviewing and refining the categories and rules, there emerged propositional statements for each category. These categories then formed the framework of the findings. These propositional statements were then written as “outcome propositions” (Maykut and Morehouse, (1994: 144) and formed the framework of the findings. The data analysis process culminated in the Table of Findings (Table 4.2) containing the categories and sub-categories identified in the data together with the outcome statements. Table 4.2 follows:

| Category and sub category  | Outcome statement   |
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| <p><b>1. Lack of understanding of the FFLP:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of understanding of the purpose and intention of the FFLP.</li> <li>• Misunderstanding between group work and ability group teaching.</li> <li>• Unwillingness to respond to curriculum changes stemming from lack of understanding.</li> <li>• Lack of understanding increased collaboration and networking amongst teachers at schools.</li> </ul> | <p>Teachers lack understanding of the FFLP, which can be attributed to the absence training and workshops. Lack of understanding influenced teacher confidence.</p>   |
| <p><b>2. Teachers have positive and negative experiences in following the FFLP guidelines:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties experienced in following the recommendations of the FFLP as contained in Gazette No. 30880.</li> <li>• Positive aspects experienced in implementing the FFLP.</li> </ul>  | <p>Teachers had ambivalent experiences, both negative and positive regarding the teaching of numeracy through the FFLP.</p>   |
| <p><b>3. Teachers' access to resources was problematic.</b></p>  | <p>Some teachers noted the following problems pertaining to resources, namely; untimely arrival of the resources to schools, inadequate resources, and inappropriate resources to support, and guide them, in the implementation of the FFLP.</p> |

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| <p><b>4. Teachers experienced the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) as a barrier in the successful implementation of the FFLP.</b></p>   | <p>Some teachers felt that LOLT was a barrier in the successful implementation of the FFLP, as they had to spend lots of time in translating resources written in English to the mother tongue of the learner.</p> |
| <p><b>5. Teachers received varying degrees of support from the school and the District in implementing the FFLP.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of training amongst teachers influenced the implementation of FFLP.</li> <li>• The workshops and in-service training related to content knowledge and teaching methodologies influenced the implementation of the FFLP.</li> <li>• The influence of District monitoring at schools.</li> <li>• The need for SMT training and empowerment in order to support and monitor FFLP implementation.</li> </ul> | <p>Many teachers felt that there was a lack of support from the schools and District, which impeded their implementation of the FFLP.</p>  |

**Table 4.2: Table of Categories and Sub-Categories, and the Outcome Statements As Emerged From the Process of Data Analysis.**



### **4.3. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

In the section that follows, I present the findings of the study.

#### **4.3.1. Lack of understanding of the FFLP**

From this study, it became evident that the majority of teachers experienced a lack of understanding of the FFLP. The following section provides a discussion by highlighting the issues where teachers experienced a lack of understanding, namely; (i) the purpose and intention of the FFLP, (ii) interpretation of the FFLP as a whole and (iii) understanding of the concept of “group work” and “ability group”. The teachers’ lack of understanding caused unwillingness in some teachers to implement the FFLP. However, in other instances, the lack of understanding stimulated and motivated teachers to voluntarily collaborate and network with other colleagues in an attempt at seeking support.

From the study, it became evident that many of the teachers were not ready and primed for curriculum change, and, as a result, they did not understand many components of the FFLP. While they were not privy to the change process, as was succinctly echoed by Ana, *“I am from the old school and we are battling with change. I guess it is because we were not part of the change process and we don’t know how to implement this new way of teaching”*, the teachers maintained that at the very least they should have been afforded ample opportunities in the form of training and workshops to better understand the FFLP. As one participant said: *“Probably it would make implementation easier if there was a workshop. When I looked at the FFLP files, there were pages and pages of printing. I looked at the files and said “I don’t have the time to go and sit and study them. There is just no time to do that”*. Another participant said: *It is through trial and error that I taught myself how to work through the programme. I am not always sure whether I am doing it the correct way or not, but I am trying my best. So much has changed since we were trained at the college as teachers. Now we are expected to teach something totally different in a new way, not like the way we were trained”*.

Another participant expressed her uncertainty and confusion, resulting from her lack of understanding and interpretation of the FFLP. Ana shared the following in this regard: *“There is just no support for FFLP. When RNCS was brought in we all went on this course during the July holidays. We all spent a week doing that. And of, course a lot of it was not very useful. It took a long time for us to get used to this new approach of doing everything. It just seemed so much was done to support us, but so much was hairy fairy. There was very little structure. People could interpret things in so many different ways. Now what we all settled down to is almost like a mixture of the old ways of teaching i.e. OBE plus this new curriculum called the FFLP”*. Ana viewed the FFLP as a “new curriculum” that departed significantly from that of the NCS, yet the FFLP is intended to support and enhance the implementation of NCS. Both Pat and Lyn, respectively, expressed a similar view by stating the following: *“I started reading the FFLP files, for the first time this year and found that I had problems because it was new to the learners. It involved new concepts and new methods of teaching”* and *“At the beginning of the year, we attended a cluster meeting only to collect the files. There was no discussion on how to use the files. We had to figure it out ourselves. At times I am confused”*.

From the responses indicated above, it can be concluded that teachers were not all informed about the intention and purpose of the FFLP, and received no support in terms of understanding of the FFLP. Many of the participants lack understanding that the contents of the FFLP is inclusive of the NCS, and, is, therefore, intended to support and enable the delivery of the RNCS. Apart from the aforementioned misunderstanding, teachers were also confused about interpreting the FFLP, as a whole. Pat and Lyn, for example, were of the misunderstanding that the FFLP files were the only resource for the FFLP. They were not aware that the Assessment Framework Milestones Guide was also a resource to support the FFLP. Both Pat and Lyn believed that the Assessment Framework Milestones document was different and separate to the FFLP, as was stated by Pat *“This is the first year that we are implementing the FFLP. Last year, we did not follow the FFLP but used the milestones document. We started implementing FFLP only in the second term after receiving the files”*. Lyn expressed a similar view by stating: *“Last year I used the Milestone. I*

*developed my own lesson plans from the milestones. I only started implementing FFLP this year in April when the FFLP files arrived. I noticed that there are similarities between the Milestones and the FFLP files”.*

In each of the above statements, it becomes clear that most of the teachers interviewed do not understand the intentions and purpose of the FFLP, and were unable to interpret the resource documents that were available in schools to support the FFLP. As a consequence, teachers were unable to implement the FFLP in the manner envisioned by the document itself.

In terms of the teacher’s lack of understanding of the FFLP, many teachers indicated that they were unwilling to implement the FFLP, because they were not informed of the intentions and they received no guidance, in terms of how to implement the FFLP, which was totally new to them. They believed that the FFLP, being a new curriculum innovation, necessitated that they change their methods of teaching, lesson plans, etc. They were quite content with using their own “tried and tested” methods, and were therefore frustrated that they had to change against was expressed by Ana: *“I found it a little bit difficult.....Rather inconvenient because I had already planned and drafted my preps long before and now I am expected to follow the FFLP. Hello not again ....I am not prepared to change”*. According to Ana, she has been successfully using the lesson plans which she had compiled years ago. The reluctance to change can also be attributed to teachers feeling that they are being inundated with change and that they cannot keep pace with the change that is constantly being imposed upon them. This sentiment was echoed by one of the participant who expressed her frustration in stating the following: *“In 2008, I started using the GDE Numeracy Guideline Document. Then we heard about the FFLP files, those green files which we had to follow. I wasn’t really very positive because I thought it would be very much like the very poor FFLP milestones document that we got. When I received those files, I just put them one side. It was about two weeks later; that I decided to look at the files to see what it was all about. I looked at it and said ‘gosh there’s a lot of printing in it, lots to read, I just don’t feel like doing that’ and I put it aside. Another week went by, and I said ‘I better get my butt in order’ and I decided to start looking at it again to see what it was*

*really all about. I liked the setting out of some of it like day 1, day 2, day 3 and so on. First it frustrated me as I like doing my own thing. Then I started to read and study it. It took me some time. I am now tired of changing all the time”.*

Another participant expressed her frustration around the issue of change by stating that: *“Just as we received the files we heard of the new CAPPS curriculum coming up with new textbooks. We don’t know how the textbooks are going to compare with the milestones order and that kind of thing. Are we going to get new textbook? What about our existing schemes of work? How are all of these going to tie in with the FFLP? So I have two minds about changing and using the FFLP files. I am fearful that just as we get into the grips of working with the files we will have to change again with the new CAPPS. So now we rest peacefully with our tried and tested methods until we have some finality with the new curriculum”.*

The study also showed that teachers experienced a misunderstanding of the two concepts, namely; “ability group teaching” (Gazette No. 30880: 17) and “group work”. The majority of the teachers interviewed for this study used the concept “ability group teaching” and “group work” synonymously, and interchangeably, when in fact they have different meanings, and, therefore, different implications for classroom practice. It can be deduced that the majority of the teachers were not implementing the principle of “ability group teaching” as specified in Gazette No. 30880. The following response by Pat indicates that she is actually practising “group work” rather than ability group teaching: *“Yes. I am teaching in groups according to the FFLP. In each group, there is one strong learner who I know will help the weaker learners. When I teach, I teach the concept to the whole class. Then they work the practical part in groups”.* This statement is indicative that there exists a clear misunderstanding between these two concepts, namely; “ability grouping” and “group work”. By emphatically stating that, *“Yes. I am teaching in groups according to the FFLP”*, Pat is convinced that she is complying with the recommendations according to the FFLP gazette No. 30880 whereas if one interprets what she has stated, then it becomes clear that she is not teaching according to ability groups Ana also made a similar remark: *“Luckily I learnt how to do group work when I went*

for OBE training. *This is the way I implement group work now*". Sadly, both, Ana and Pat, do not understand and realise that their method of grouping is not the type advocated by the FFLP, where learners of similar abilities are grouped together; rather their method represents a form of grouping where learners are arranged according to different abilities, a method used mostly for collaborative learning.

Mag also believes that the concept "group work" is the same as "ability group teaching". She feels that her lack of understanding of group work is attributed to her not attending the OBE training. Mag expressed her need for support in the following way: *"We were never taught for example how to do group work. We were trained to teach using the whole class method. Now I am expected to do group work but I am not sure how. I never even attended OBE training. If I had attended OBE workshops I would have understood what group work requires. The first time I learnt how to do group work was when I was appointed at a LSEN school. But I am still not sure if what I am doing now is correct or not. There was no support. When I asked my colleagues how they were doing group work, they were just as confused. They would say "I'm struggling. I still don't know what to do". Everyone is teaching by trial and error. Sometimes I think at least if someone could show us how to teach the way we are supposed to teach, then we will know how to teach. What is put onto paper theoretically is not easy to practice. Even if someone explains to you how to divide your groups is not easy to understand. It actually sounds chaotic. You can only understand if someone shows you practically how it is to be done"*.

A similar confusion between these concepts were articulated by Pet, as follows: *"For instance when I am doing story sums, I create story sums for that group on plus, this group division, this group multiplication, this group subtraction. I go and listen how they discuss in groups. My learners are grouped according to mixed abilities. I mix the strong ones with the weaker learner so that they are able to assist the weaker learners. Some children prefer to learn from a friend. Sometimes they are scared of me. But the moment they work with their peers it becomes simpler. And this is from the FFLP"*.

Whenever, some of the teachers experienced any challenge regarding the FFLP, they voluntarily opted to collaborate and network with other colleagues in their school, in order to seek clarity about the challenge pertaining to their interpretation/understanding of the FFLP. Majority of the participants indicated that whenever they were unsure of an issue in the FFLP, they found it very convenient to ask for help from colleagues within the school. This sentiment was succinctly expressed by Pet as follows: *"Because we are unsure whether we are doing the right thing or not, we rely on each other for support"*. Mes stated the following regarding teacher collaboration: *"We have grade meetings at least once a week so that there is common understanding. This helped as teachers got together and shared their understanding of what needed to be done. The more experienced teachers served as grade co-ordinators and they assisted new teachers"*.

Regarding collaboration amongst and between teachers in her school, Sib, who is a foundation phase HoD, indicated that she was encouraging the practice of collaboration amongst the teachers at her school, as is evident in her response: *"In our preparation days, we do encourage our colleagues to ask for help and to help one another. New teachers have mentors, who are paired together, discuss over breaks, visit classes to observe lessons and then give feedback"*. Sib further stated that *"I can say that we are all trying their best. As I have said every Tuesdays, we meet as a phase. We read through the milestones and lesson plans, discuss it together, and show one another the ways to tackle these problems"*. Lyn and Pet echoed the similar sentiment as follows; Lyn: *"We discuss our lessons amongst colleagues. We support each other, for example, when we have to translate from English to isiXhosa as the medium of instruction is isi-Xhosa and all the teacher support materials are in English"* and Pet; *"We have weekly grade meetings where we do our planning. We discuss the lessons together and come up with ideas on how to teach the concepts"*.

Mag stated that regular meetings with teachers within the phase had many advantages as it contributed towards the achievement of the common goals of the FFLP. Teachers discuss practical problems, for example, lack of knowledge from the previous grades, so that these can be addressed by the current grade teacher so that these problems do not recur. This sentiment was echoed by

Mag: *"The entire phase teachers meet once every week at school. As we have only one class per grade, such a meeting ensures that every grade teacher knows what is being done in each of the grades".*

#### **4.3.2. Negative experiences in implementing the specifications of the FFLP**

From the study conducted, it is evident that some teachers were not able to implement the FFLP according to the specifications as contained in Gazette No. 30880.

In addition to the above mentioned challenges, teachers also stated that there were other issues of the FFLP that posed a challenge. One such issue was the FFLP Assessment Framework Document, which contains the milestones and serves as a pace-setter. In order to ensure adequate coverage of the content, teachers believe that the FFLP moves fairly swiftly between the teachings of concepts, by allocating time, and by re-visiting them at a later stage. Teachers bemoaned that they were not given adequate time to ensure thorough teaching of the concepts, as was expressed by Ana: *"I think that if only the FFLP could deal with a concept thoroughly at once i.e. not bit of each term, then the learners will have a better understanding, as more time will be spent on the concept. The FFLP now jumps around so much for different concepts. The children get confused. They struggle because they cannot think logically. They have no idea at all what operation to use to solve a problem. If you have to jump from capacity to shape and then to time, they get confused. They need structure of doing something and finishing that until they actually know it thoroughly".*

Teachers also experienced difficulties in following the FFLP lesson plans, as the teaching of concepts were not structured to be covered in consecutive lessons, but were structured in such a way that the teaching of a particular concept extended over several lessons throughout the year. The findings of this study show that because of the restriction in time, teachers were of the opinion that many of the slower learners remain behind as the teacher progresses with the teaching of the new concept even before the slow learners had grasped those disseminated previously. One participant, namely Pat, expressed her

frustrations as follows: *"I find that I introduce a concept on day one. On the second day, it is something else. When I go back some time later, I have to start from the beginning because they had forgotten what was taught to them. It is as if I have failed as a teacher. So there is no continuity. What I would like to happen is that the same concept must be done today and tomorrow so that there can be progression from the previous day's lesson. This can help to consolidate what was previously taught"*.

Mag also voiced a similar concern; that the restricted time does not allow an activity to be continued over several consecutive lessons. Mag voiced her dissatisfaction in this regard by stating: *"Each day there are new activities that have to be taught. A new concept is introduced even though the learners have not yet mastered the previous concepts"*. Just as restricted time for completing concepts disadvantaged slower learners, as teachers have to move on to another topic before they have adequately grasped the current one, so could stricter time management within each lesson. The time limits imposed maintain the sense that the class, as a whole, was moving forwards, but again posed problems for slower learners, who might fail to grasp the learning objectives of the first part of the lesson before being asked to practise individual examples.

Two of the participants indicated that there were contextual factors within the school that prevented them from following the times as recommended by the FFLP. Mes expressed her frustration, as follows: *"I am just not able to keep up with the pace of teaching. There are too many activities per day. Some of the learners are very weak; they cannot cope with the activities in the lessons. So during class visits, when your lesson presentation does not correlate with your lesson plan, then you are penalised by the SMT"*. Ana's response was as follows: *"When you have limited time and you still have to take tuck shop orders, you got to make them change for PE, you got to discipline learners in between, there is time taken away from every period. So even though you may take 10 minutes for mental, your orals, counting, quizzes, etc. It often takes a lot more. Then you take time from the other work in your lesson. Or else you shorten it so that you can get the other work done. I just have to try and balance things*



*all the time. It's not always easy. There are things that happen in the day that you don't anticipate, you cannot get that time back".*

Some teachers in the study identified constraints inherent in the classroom, such as unexpected interruptions, discipline problems, large class sizes, and diverse abilities of learners, as being factors that served as barriers to implementing the recommended time allocation. Mes pointed out that as hard as she tries to follow the time guideline contained in the FFLP, she is often unable to do so, as: *"Sometimes we just cannot teach all of the concepts because of contextual problems.... intercom interruptions, discipline problems, slow learners and so on and during our appraisal we are penalised by the HoD for poor time management, I don't think this is fair".*

One participant, Monty, highlighted the problem she encountered with new learners who have come on transfer from a school where the FFLP was non-existent. She stated the following in this regard: *"Another problem is when children come from other schools. This year I had two learners from Eastern Cape. When I looked at their books, they had not followed the FFLP. I did not know where to start. They just could not count or do simple number operations. A lot of time is spent supporting weak learners. I spend a lot of time teaching children grade one and two concepts first and then continue with what is in the lesson plan".* If all schools were implementing FFLP they would have been teaching the concepts according to the milestones, as contained in the assessment framework document. This sentiment was expressed by Monty as follows *"If all schools are implementing FFLP the way it should, then a learner moving from another school in the course of the year will not have a problem as the learner would have covered the same concepts at the previous school. Because the FFLP offers standardisation, we are all working on the same level. We know what needs to be covered. Even when learners go to grade four next year, they all would have covered the same content even though they had different teachers in the previous year. This makes it much easier. The grade four teachers will not need to backtrack some learners if all teachers are working at the same pace as the FFLP files".*

Many teachers also highlighted the challenge of following the recommended daily activities, as specified in Gazette No. 30880. Some of the participants felt the FFLP is overambitious with regard to what needed to be covered in the time allocated for each concept. It is for this reason that many learners do not meet the 'expected' level, as is set out in the FFLP requirements for the end of each year, which is resulting in considerable gaps in understanding. Pat expressed her concern as follows: *"I can't teach all of the activities because some of the learners are too slow. On some days I may do either counting or mental maths. On some days I leave out the counting and mental maths and do only the concept teaching. I do not do all of them. I may select 1 or 2 of the activities. As a result, by the end of the year I have not really covered all that needed to be covered"*. She further stated that it is almost impossible for her to adhere to the time allocated, because of the varying abilities of the learners in her class. Quite often, teaching the weaker learners demands much more of her time, as a result she is not able to cover everything that needs to be taught within the particular lesson. This made it difficult to take pupils on from a particular level at the beginning of the next year.

Another reason highlighted by teachers for not being able to include all of the recommended activities is the knowledge gap amongst learners. It is unfortunate that FFLP assumes that learners have reached a certain level at the end of the year, and have to be taken on from there at the beginning of the next year, when in fact many pupils have considerable gaps in their understanding. Anne expressed her experience of the aforementioned assumption, in the following way: *"I feel that the learners are not adequately prepared for grade three. It could start in grade R, it could start in grade 1, it could start in grade 2, I don't know..... But there is such a gap. You know we got to go back and teach addition in tens and units and then teach hundreds, tens and units. The grade3 learners don't even know simple bonds like  $8 - 3 =$  and  $8 + 3$ . They just don't know them. And this takes time"*. This highlights the knowledge gap that exists amongst the learners, as they enter grade three because of the inadequate curriculum knowledge of previous years. It, thus, appears that for many teachers, the FFLP requirements for pace and curriculum

coverage serve rather to undermine the development of understanding of the concepts, than to facilitate the effective learning of these very concepts.

#### **4.3.3. Positive aspects experienced in implementing the FFLP**

Having highlighted some of the negative experiences of teachers, there were some teachers who experienced the FFLP positively. These teachers stated that the FFLP provided them with clear focussed, guidelines for how to structure their teaching programme. Anne voiced her satisfaction of the structured programme, as follows: *"I like the FFLP because it gives me a definite starting and ending for each term. I mean the RNCS document covered the same work. It (RNCS) was very hairy fairy in that you must have done everything by the end of the year. But now there is so much structure. You know that the learners must know this now, and that later and so on"*. Another participant, Mag, stated the following: *"When I first came to this school I was teaching grade one. I had no experience in teaching grade three. Then there was this FFLP milestone and through trial and error, I began teaching grade three. With the FFLP, at least I knew that I had a guideline to support me. With the FFLP, at least I knew that I had a guideline to support me. I knew what to teach and how to teach in grade three"*. Mag stated that she liked the FFLP as the milestones provided her with a clear direction and guidance when she was asked to teach grade three for the first time: *"I knew what to teach and how to teach in grade three"*. Monty also highlighted the usefulness of the FFLP, in terms of, providing structure and allowing for the progression of concepts as she mentioned: *"It tells you in term one what number range within each concept should be covered. It also progresses from each term to the next term. Now that is really useful. And every term there is progression in that the number range increases. So in term3 you will expect to teach up to 1000. The concepts get more difficult as the year progresses. It requires the learners to build on from previous knowledge in order to acquire new knowledge"*.

Lyn was very optimistic that the FFLP was going to bring about improvement in numeracy, since the necessary support materials were accessible to all teachers. This sentiment is echoed when she remarked: *"Because there were*

*no files last year, teachers were confused. A lot of grade one and two work was not covered with my grade three learners. I think it is going to improve in the future".* Lyn believes that if teachers in all grades implement the FFLP using the appropriate resources, such as the files and the milestones contained in the Assessment Framework Document, the appropriate content relevant for each grade will be adequately covered. She stated that from her experience, she observed that most of her grade three learners had knowledge gaps, for her grade three learners were not taught the concepts when they were in grade one and two. This could be attributed to teachers neglecting the teaching of concepts, since they did not know what to teach, because there were no FFLP files then.

From this study, some of the positive experience was the "standardization" of the FFLP, in terms of the Assessment Framework Document, which packages the different concepts into terms, the time allocation, the FFLP lesson plans and the daily recommended activities. The following is an excerpt from the interview with Monty, in which she highlighted her positive experience of the FFLP: *"Because the FFLP offers standardisation, we are all working on the same level. We know what needs to be covered. Even when learners go to grade four next year, they all would have covered the same content even though they had different teachers in the previous year. This makes it much easier. The grade four teachers will not need to backtrack some learners if all teachers are working at the same pace as the FFLP files. I experienced lots of problems with a learner who came on transfer from Limpopo Province in June. They had not followed the FFLP. He was just not coping".*

Some of the participants stated that the FFLP ensured adequate coverage of concepts, which were previously neglected. This was acknowledged by Pet who stated that the *"The FFLP is really is working for me. I can see the difference between now and then when FFLP wasn't introduced yet. It really empowers me. There are certain things that I was not doing. But now I am teaching because I can now see that these are the knowledge and skills that our children need. The FFLP really helped me to lay the foundations of understanding. FFLP requires us to include problem solving every day. I wasn't*

*doing it before. But now I'm doing it. Through word problems, the learners are able to apply what they have learnt. In the past we used to have one day set aside for problem solving. It was treated as a separate concept. But that has changed with the FFLP. We don't do it that way anymore".* Charls described her positive experience regarding the problem solving aspect, as follows: *"But now after we teach a concept, I give them word problems. This really helps to re-enforce their understanding. Problem solving comes through a regular stream of their work instead of just one day when you sit with it. It is something that runs through the teaching now. It is done so differently now than when I first came here when we used to have an A4 sheet full of problem sums. That has changed completely. We don't do it that way anymore".* Being a structured programme, the FFLP has boosted the confidence of teacher; this was expressed by Sib, who states that the *"FFLP has brought back the passion for teaching"*. Three other participants expressed similar experiences as follows:

*Mag/ 1/U1: With the FFLP, at least I knew that I had a guideline to support me. I knew what to teach and how to teach in grade three.*

*Pet1/U2: The FFLP is really is working for me. I can see the difference between now and then when FFLP wasn't introduced yet. It really empowers me. There are certain things that I was not doing. But now I am teaching because I can now see that these are the knowledge and skills that our children need. The FFLP really gives me clear guidelines.*

*Lyn 2/U4: Because there were no files last year, teachers were confused. A lot of grade two works was not covered with my grade three learners. Now I spend a lot of time teaching children grade one and two concepts first and then continue with what is in the lesson plan. Next year, I think it is going to be better".*

Both Monty and Pet felt that the allocation of time per activity, as stated in the Gazette No. 30880, provided them with useful guidelines on how to pace their teaching. This was expressed by Pet as follows: *"I like the way the gazette provides structure by breaking down the time for each of the activities for*

*example 10 minutes of counting every day. I was not doing that before". Monty particularly liked the FFLP; it is a "useful guideline on how to develop concepts in a progressive manner. It also progresses from each term to the next term. Every term there is progression in that the number range increases. The concepts get more difficult as the year progresses. It requires the learners to build on from previous knowledge in order to acquire new knowledge".*

Another positive experience highlighted by two of the participants was that the lesson plans contained in the FFLP file reduced the amount of time they spent on lesson planning and preparation, for they used the lesson plans as it was presented to them. The two responses were as follows:

*Pet: "We do not do lesson plans any more. We just pull out the activities. We use the files as it is most of the time. Learners are kept doing something and learning something new each and every day" and*

*Lyn: "Now I don't have to spend time doing lesson plans because I follow the lesson plans in the files"*

From these responses, it is evident that teachers perceive the FFLP file as a good recipe for lesson plans.

The above excerpts are illustrative of the positive experiences of the FFLP, as a standardised programme, in so far as, offering guidelines and structure on time allocation, progression of concepts and recommended activities to ensure consistent curriculum coverage.

#### **4.3.4. Access to resources impeded the implementation of the FFLP**

Most of the teachers interviewed in this study, bemoaned the lack access to resources pertaining to the FFLP. The majority of the participants mentioned that the late arrival of the FFLP files impeded the implementation of the FFLP, for they were confused as to where to start with the files when the files eventually arrived at their schools. These sentiments were echoed by the participants; Mag, Ana and Sam, respectively, as follows: "It was difficult to

*suddenly start something new from the middle of the year”, “The FFLP files came to our school only in the third term. So the SMT stored them in the strong room and it was never given to us”, and “We received the files only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> term. There was just no time to try out anything new. We stuck to what we’ve been doing all the while and ignored the files”.*

The following problem, highlighted by the teachers, also related to the lack of adequate resources. Sam stated that: *“We only have one copy of the file per grade. How can we share this with 4 teachers in the grade? This is a big big problem. We can’t even make copies of the files because we don’t have the copier”.* According to another participant, Pat, *“Time is also wasted when learners have to share their counters. I just cannot keep up with the recommended times”.*

Some of the participants felt that the resources used to support the implementation of FFLP were insufficient, in terms of, providing ideas for consolidation, reinforcement of concepts and addressing the language barrier. Teachers often relied on other support materials, such as the GDE Numeracy Guidelines, and other workbooks which are expressed by Monty, Lyn, Mag and Pat, respectively: *“I use a variety of documents, manuals and resources for worksheets and ideas. There is that big GDE red book. Look at whatever concepts needs to be covered from the FFLP and try to find suitable activities and more examples from the GDE document”.*, *“I find that the numeracy guideline extremely useful. It helps me to understand the FFLP file. I use it for more examples”*, *“I started using the FFLP lesson plans as it was presented but I then realised that it was not enough. At times I use the FFLP file as a guideline and integrate it together with other books for ideas. Sometimes I feel that the activities are too simple for the high flyers”* and *“Even the resources provided do not support the mother tongue teaching. I have to use resources from other books for ideas for worksheets. The FFLP files do not have adequate ideas”.*

#### **4.3.5. LOLT as a barrier for the implementation of the FFLP**

The issue of LOLT was also raised as a barrier and challenge by the majority of participants in this study. Language as a barrier was experienced in the following contexts: dual medium teaching raised serious challenges for some participants. In some schools, dual medium teaching is followed for different units in Grade Three. This was problematic as Grade Three teachers could not work in teams. One participant felt that those teachers teaching in the medium of Afrikaans were at a greater advantage, as all the learners in that class were Afrikaans home language speakers. This sentiment was echoed by Monty, as follows: *As my school 's medium of instruction is parallel medium i.e. English and Afrikaans, my colleague who teaches through the medium of Afrikaans is able to make better progress with her learners as all of her learners home language is Afrikaans. With most of the learners in my class, whose home language is [an] African languages [sic], the medium of instruction is English. Language is a serious barrier and this takes up a lot of my time".*

Teachers teaching in English were disadvantaged as they had mixed language speakers in their classes. The following were some of the responses of the teachers that sum up this point succinctly:

*Pat3/U15: The learners find problem solving very difficult. They cannot read in English. In grade one and in grade two, the learners were taught numeracy in isiZulu and Sesotho. They coped very well then, but now (grade three) they are struggling to learn numeracy in English.*

*Pat3/U17: In grade one and two, our learners were not taught English as First Additional Language. It was only home language i.e. IsiZulu and Sesotho. That is why we have this problem. I have to code switch and read to the learners all the time. I have to explain in mother tongue. They have a problem writing number names in English. They have to use the wall charts. They just cannot work on their own.*

*Sam2/U8: I teach in mother tongue...the FFLP is in English. Some resources are also in English ... Telling me how we can expect our children to learn in mother tongue when the resources are in English.*



*We were also told to do our preps in mother tongue. It is a challenge to translate the preps in mother tongue.*

*Mag3/U16: Most of the learners at our school are from the squatter camps. They all speak different languages. No one type of dominant language can be identified. I am isiZulu speaking and not able to speak all of their languages and cannot code switch to learners. Our medium of instruction is English. Very few learners understand English. Reading Word problem is a real problem. I believe that if I had a class of isiZulu learners only, I will achieve greater success in my teaching.*

*Sib3/U18: The FFLP is in English and our LOLT is isiZulu. We tend to steal English words for our learners so that they can be able to communicate in our community when they go to buy. As we supposed to teach numeracy in IsiZulu as it is our Mother Tongue, it is difficult to use FFLP because the language is a problem.*

The above responses also allude to the fact that all the resources concerning and related to the FFLP is in English, yet teachers are expected to teach in the medium of home language, which in many cases is other than English. Many teachers were, therefore, unable to follow the prescribed times as provided in the FFLP Gazette No. 30880. Teachers indicated that they had to spend lots of time explaining and translating from the English based resources.

#### **4.3.6. Teachers experienced varying degrees of school and District support**

The findings show that some of the teachers could not implement the FFLP in a decisive manner, since they lacked support from the School Management Team (SMT) and the District. The majority of the participants indicated that although they had attended workshops co-ordinated by the District, none of these workshops were directly related to the FFLP.

One of the participants, Sib, stated that while she attended workshops related to numeracy, these workshops were never directly related to the FFLP. Sib,

however, stated that attending these workshops boosted her confidence in teaching numeracy, as it contributed to an improvement in her subject content knowledge. She stated that she was able to *“put the workshops together like a puzzle and use it in the FFLP lessons”*.

Many of the participants stated that the lack of SMT support was attributed to the lack of knowledge and understanding by the SMT members. One of the participants, Mes, was particularly vocal regarding the need to capacitate SMT, by stating: *“If the HOD’s were fully capacitated regarding the FFLP, they would be able to convince the Principal to make the decisions in the best interest of the learners. If the principal is knowledgeable about FP curriculum, she will indeed have a better understanding of how learners learn. Then maybe she will not put pressure on us as teachers to force the teaching of concepts onto learners for which they are not ready”*.

Mes expressed her frustrations at having to follow the instructions from the SMT, to totally suspend the use of the FFLP files, as the SMT believed that the FFLP focussed on too many concepts and compromised the teaching of bonds and tables, which Grade Three learners need to know in preparation for grade four. She also stated that *“The Intermediate phase HOD felt that the standard of the lesson plans in the FFLP files were not adequate to prepare the learners for grade 4. She (Intermediate HOD) also stated that they were not implementing FFLP as they found that there were many gaps. The files that they (intermediate phase) had received from the department were still unopened in boxes lying in trolleys. It is sad to see what wasteful expenditure this is. I haven’t seen a single teacher use the file even as a resource. This was another reason why we had to stop implementing the FFLP”*.

Most of the participants recognised that the need for SMT capacity building and regular monitoring by the District Office would ensure successful implementation of the FFLP. This view was emphasised by Charls who stated that *“It would be nice if only the District could look at providing rigorous in-service training to capacitate teachers and SMT. SMT must also be told that this is a programme that all schools have to follow and they have no option but*

*to implement the programme whether they like it or not. Monitoring tools based on the FFLP to be used at school level and District level should be developed by the District and given to schools”.*

The following sentiments further corroborate the teachers’ views regarding the lack of SMT and District support:

*Sam2/U11: Since FFLP was introduced in 2008 I did not attend any training. The HOD attends all the training but does not give us feedback. I do not know if I am doing the right thing as the HOD does not share what she learnt from the workshops she attends.*

Mag2/U7: There was no support from our school District. When I asked my colleagues how they were doing group work, they were just as confused. They would say “I’m struggling. I still don’t know what to do”. Everyone was teaching by trial and error. Sometimes I think at least if someone could show us how to teach the way we are supposed to teach, then we will know how to teach. Our HoD and [school] District should be supporting us but sadly they aren’t. So much has changed since we were trained at the college as teachers. Now we are expected to teach something totally different in a new way, not like the way we were trained.

Sam 2/U11: We were just given the FFLP files and told to teach according to the files. We did not take the time to read and understand the files. Most of us saw it as an opportunity to escape from doing lesson plan preparations. But it was only during the class visits and book control by the management that it was discovered that teachers were neither using the FFLP lesson plans nor their own plans in teaching.

Lyn3/U16: Towards the second half of the year, we attended a cluster meeting only to collect the files. There was no discussion on how to use the files. We had to figure it out ourselves. At times I am confused.

#### **4.4. CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the findings of the study. The findings were derived after having followed the constant comparative method adapted by both Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The following six findings were identified and explained, namely; (i) teachers' lack of understanding of the FFLP, (ii) lack of access to appropriate and relevant resources, (iii) LOLT as a barrier, (iv) lack of school and District support, (v) positive and (iv) negative experiences in implementing the FFLP guidelines. In explicating each of the categories, I used the voices of the participants in the form of appropriate quotations to illustrate the emphasis of the discussion. From the findings, it became evident that teachers experienced ambivalent (both positive and negative) experiences pertaining to their implementation of the FFLP. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings in light of relevant research literature.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion of Findings**

## **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, in the light of applicable literature, I discuss the findings of the study, which explored the experiences of grade three teachers in implementing the FFLP in numeracy. The discussion is presented according to the order of the following findings, namely; (i) lack of understanding of the FFLP, (ii) positive and negative experiences in following the specifications of the FFLP, (iii) poor access to resources, (iv) Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT) and (v) the varying degrees of support from schools and Districts.

## **5.2. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.2.1. Lack of understanding of the FFLP**

According to Fischer (2003: 65), policy implementers cannot be understood by simply regarding them as cogs in a machine, or as elements in an interactive system. Rather, policy implementers are meaning makers, and act on the basis of their understanding and interpretation of elements contained in the policy. In other words, people charged with the implementation of policy construct meaning of their reality in a subjective fashion. Such constructions are not phenomena that are unique to them as individuals, instead they draw on a stock of socially circulating repertoires of meaning, to which new ideas are sometimes added, while old ideas often fall away. From the findings, it is evident that the

majority of teachers did not fully understand the following aspects of the FFLP, namely; the rationale of the FFLP, some of the teaching strategies, such as “ability group teaching”, and the interpretation of some of the documents supporting the FFLP, such as the FFLP Files and the Gazette. The sentiments echoed by the teachers regarding their lack of understanding of the FFLP resonates with Barret’s (2004: 67) argument, that implementation gaps can arise from the policy when there is poor “meaning making” amongst implementers of the policy to be implemented. He argues that it is incumbent that meaning making, policy design, policy implementation and policy monitoring and evaluation be planned in an integrated manner, in order to ensure that implementers, initiators and evaluators develop a synergy aimed at ensuring effective policy implementation.

Some teachers voiced their dissatisfaction with not having been invited to participate, and contribute to the design and development of the FFLP. While this dissatisfaction was overtly expressed, it must be noted that teacher unions, who are composed almost solely of teachers, were in fact involved in the design and development of the FFLP. Thus, I am not totally convinced that teachers had no input whatsoever during the initiation phase of the FFLP. In keeping with the significance of stakeholder involvement, Barber & Fullan (2005) argue that in order to ensure policies to be successful, they should involve target groups, and they should allow for an open participatory system, where policy makers plan with the people (i.e. teachers), rather than for the people, by meeting their felt needs. Such participation will give the target groups (i.e. teachers) a sense of belonging, as well as ensure their committed to the successful implementation of the policy.

There were a few teachers who indicated that they are not implementing the FFLP, as they are not clear as to what is expected of them regarding the application of certain components of the FFLP, such as the time allocation, recommended teaching activities and the FFLP Files. Fullan (2004) states that for policies, reforms or programmes to have a sweeping effect; policy implementers must be able to derive meaning from the policy. In keeping with Fullan’s (2004) point of view, it was evident, from this study, that the majority of

the teachers were not fully conversant with all the components, guidelines and supporting documents associated with the FFLP. Barber and Fullen (2005: 89) reminds us that there needs to be comprehensive guidelines, such as moral purpose, getting the basics right, communicating the big picture, incentivised collaboration, and lateral capacity building, strengthening and capacitating leadership, in order to promote and enhance successful policy implementation. I agree with the sentiments echoed by Barber and Fullen (2004) that teachers, for example, ought to undergo appropriate training and development programmes either in the form of workshops, seminars, mentorship or coaching, in order to derive value added meaning from the FFLP.

Having considered the views expressed by researchers, such as Barber & Fullen (2004), some concerted efforts should be made by both the Districts and SMT to try and quell apprehensions and misconceptions that teachers may have regarding the FFLP. One such strategy could be to undertake a needs evaluation, in order to identify challenges, negative experiences, misunderstanding, etc., that teachers have of the FFLP. The strategy, in question, could be supported by facilitating relevant needs based workshops for teachers to better their understanding of the FFLP.

Buchanan (2008: 2) argues that change is an emotional journey, and that change is threatening and fundamentally disruptive for teachers. He urges that change needs to be planned for. All stakeholders need to be clear about why change is needed. It is important for leaders and managers in education to plan and undertake a risk analysis before any new programme (in this case the FFLP) is implemented. In addition, Buchanan (2008: 2) argues that policy makers need to plan for different target groups. He (2008: 7) states that, within each group there will be sub-groups, at different stages of 'readiness' to change, which was evident from the utterances of participants in this study. After all, not all of the teachers experienced the FFLP negatively. In fact, there were some teachers who reported positive experiences of the FFLP.

From the findings, it became evident that many participants did not fully understand the two methods of teaching as advocated by the FFLP, namely;



employing “group work” and “ability group teaching”. It is clear that many teachers use these concepts interchangeably, because they do not understand the difference between these two methods of teaching. One of the prescriptions of the FFLP, as formulated in Gazette No. 30880, is that concept development must be done everyday using the “ability group teaching” method, which refers to “grouping learners for instruction of a similar ability, or achievement, so as to reduce their heterogeneity” (Slavin: 1987). The major advantage of teaching learners according to ability groups is that it becomes easier to manage and keep the learners attentive in smaller groups, as opposed to teaching the whole class (Hallinan and Sorensen: 1983). In this regard, high ability learners can progress at a faster pace, without having to slow down for their less advanced peers, on the one hand; while, low ability learners can benefit from this segregation, in that, the teachers can provide them with an appropriate curriculum and pace of instruction, on the other hand. In contrast to ability grouping, “group work” refers to grouping of learners of mixed abilities for instruction where the aim is to promote “collaborative learning where learners learn by being actively involved in the learning process” (Reid: 2006). This method of teaching is advocated in the implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), which advocates learner participation in activities. Whilst some teachers acknowledged openly that they did not know how to implement ability group teaching in numeracy, there were others who were actually doing group work, and were content. They felt that it was the same as ability group teaching. However, some of the responses of the teachers showed clearly that they experienced misunderstanding regarding these concepts. This misunderstanding stemmed from the fact that the teachers were not trained to teach according to ability groups. The other reason as reported by some of the teachers who attended the NCS in-service training was that they were trained to implement group work. This finding resonates with Spillane’s (2000) view that teacher’s prior beliefs and practices often pose challenges not because teachers are unwilling to adapt to new policies, but their existing subjective knowledge may interfere with their ability to interpret and implement a reform that is consistent with the policymaker’s intent. Unfortunately, many teachers assume that group work is the same as “ability group teaching” because this new information i.e. ability group teaching is interpreted in light of what is

already understood i.e. group work. Thus there is a need for workshops and in service training on how to employ “ability group teaching”, which should be monitored, so as to correct this misunderstanding.

From the findings, it became evident that because teachers lacked a comprehensive understanding of the FFLP, most of the teachers concerned took it upon themselves to network and collaborate between their peers within their school, and in other schools within their school district. According to Laycock, Gable, and Korinek (1991), collaboration cannot exist by itself, as it can only occur when it is associated with some program or activity that is based on the shared goals of the teachers involved. Depending upon the shared programmatic goals of the teachers, teachers work together in many diverse ways to deliver services to learners. The FFLP is a typical example of a programme that is based on the shared goals of the teachers, since it has a common goal, i.e. to improve learner performance. Friend and Cook (1992:5) maintain a similar point of view, and state that collaboration refers to “the direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work towards a common goal”. They go on to argue that because collaboration is voluntary, not administratively mandated, teachers often form close, but informal, collaborative partnerships with colleagues. In this regard, collaboration within the grades and within the phase could serve as an effective way of providing support to one another, for the FFLP in-cooperates shared goals amongst all grades. Friend and Cook (1992) argue that one of the most promising benefits of teacher collaboration is the increased opportunity it gives teachers to interact with one another regarding instructional issues. Participants experienced many benefits through collaboration, as they shared common programmatic goals regarding the FFLP. They were also able to obtain ideas and feedback from their peers to help solve many instructional dilemmas that they had encountered. As a result, the participants became empowered, as they acquired skills and knowledge from one another, which they could then use in their classrooms. McCaleb (1993: 102) supports the argument that empowerment is created when individuals are involved in the “creation of knowledge”. The emphasis here is on the creation of knowledge, as it allows the individual to feel more competent and in control

of the situation. From this study, it became evident that teachers were empowered by their own colleagues through collaboration. Teacher empowerment increased their confidence, which had a positive effect on the implementation of the FFLP. This type of teacher empowerment is in keeping with the notion of Communities of Practice (CoP) as advocated by Lave and Wenger (1998). Lave and Wenger (1998: 89) argue that CoP is a process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in a subject or area collaborate over an extended period of time, sharing ideas and strategies, determine solutions, and build innovations.

Lave and Wenger (1998: 32) argue that there are three requirements for the establishment of CoPs, namely:

- There needs to be a domain. A CoP has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest (in the case of this study, the shared domain will consist of Grade Three teachers teaching Numeracy.). Lave and Wenger (1998) remind us that CoP is not simply about a network of people or club of friends. Once membership is attained to the domain, then the member becomes committed to the domain.
- There needs to be a community. A necessary component is that members of a specific domain interact and engage in shared activities, help each other, and share information with each other. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. In this way, merely sharing the same job does not necessitate a Cop. The role of the SMT will be fundamental in terms of encouraging, strengthening and promoting this “community” as proposed by Lave and Wenger (1998).
- There needs to be a practice. The third requirement for a CoP is that the members are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources which can include stories, helpful tools, experiences, stories, ways of handling typical problems, etc. This kind of interaction needs to be developed over time. Informal conversations held by people of the same profession (e.g. office assistants or graduate students) help people share and develop a set of cases and stories that can become a shared repertoire for their practice, whether they realize it or not.

From the requirements highlighted by Lave and Wenger (1998), it becomes evident that CoPs is a planned activity even though the interactions / discussions within CoPs may be informal and unintentional. If properly managed and nurtured within the school, CoPs can play a significant role in so far as teachers learning from each other, sharing ideas about teaching and learning and supporting each other, for example in implementing the FFLP.

From the findings, it became evident that there were both negative and positive experiences, in terms of following the specifications of the FFLP. These experiences will be discussed in two separate sub-categories as (i) negative and (ii) positive experiences.

#### **5.2.2. Negative experiences in following the recommendations of the FFLP (GAZETTE NO.30880)**

While the FFLP is intended to assist and support teachers by specifying the following; i.e. the milestones to guide teachers on how to pace the curriculum content over a school year, the amount of time to be allocated for each of the daily activities; the necessary resources and teaching apparatus to be available in each numeracy classroom and the standardised assessment programmes, compelling arguments are made against –such prescriptions by various scholars and commentators.

Studies conducted by Schon (1983), Davis and Petit (1994) and Pendleberry (1995) conclude that, in most cases, prescriptions place undue burden on teachers, and, as a result, they become restricted in order to satisfy outcomes and objectives of “politicians” who have no regard, or respect for contextual factors of each school. The points highlighted by the authors above, have reference to the findings in this study i.e. teachers experience difficulties in following the prescriptions of the FFLP. In this regard, for example, teachers mentioned that they were not able to follow the pace of the FFLP lesson plans, due to the fact that their learners were too slow. Some teachers admitted that when the lesson plans arrived at their school, they followed them as they were presented, and went on to progress to the next lesson even though learners

had not grasped the concepts taught previously. The teachers also stated that the lesson plans did not make provision for consolidation or revision of the previous work. Davis and Petit (1999: 389) argues that “If teachers are required to teach according to what has been planned for them, this may be thought to cast them in the role of mere technicians. In this way teachers feel undermined as professionals”. This sentiment, echoed by Davis and Petit (1999), is in keeping with this finding, where teachers were not in favour of a recipe driven approach to mediate teaching and learning. Some teachers felt that the FFLP was too prescriptive and did not allow teachers any room for flexibility. Teachers felt that flexibility is important, in the effort to contextualise teaching and learning, in the learner and school profile within which they teach.

Another issue that emerged from this finding was the difficulties experienced by teachers, in terms of, implementing the specifications of the FFLP, as prescribed by Gazette No. 30880. The FFLP specifies the type of activities that must be completed on a daily basis, as well as, the recommended time allocation. The purpose of providing these specifications is to ensure adequate curriculum coverage within the year. Teachers reported that the FFLP files were not really a useful resource and did not cater for the individual needs of the learners. According to the FFLP lesson plans, it has been observed that concepts are rarely developed and extended over several lessons. This approach is aimed at avoiding ‘doing a topic to death’ and thus boring able pupils. The FFLP moves fairly swiftly between the teaching of new concepts, by allocating time and revisiting them at a later stage. This has serious consequences for ensuring effective learning, as teachers had to move on even if learners had not grasped the concepts. The problem highlighted is in keeping with the argument postulated by Pendleberry (1995), who argues that if teachers are to use the prescribed “teacher proof” methods, and follow a pace of teaching that is enforced by others, then they may not want to be held accountable for the learning outcomes of the learners. This recipe driven approach can prove to be counter-productive for improving the quality of teaching and learning.

This finding also revealed that teachers experienced difficulties in teaching according to the allocated time prescriptions contained in the FFLP. The issue of time pressure, and time constraints, were revealed within the context of “ability group teaching”, recommended daily activities, competence of learners and LOLT. Many teachers reported that the competence of their learners was a significant constraint on their classroom practice and the reason for the difficulty in implementing the time allocation as specified in the Gazette No. 30880. This was illustrated in the teacher’s response that many of the learners could hardly read and write and many learners had not mastered the basic prior knowledge (grade one and two knowledge) which was a pre- requisite for understanding new concept taught in grade three. This resulted in more time being spent with the weaker learners in terms of providing more teacher assistance.

Another reason for teachers not being able to follow the time allocation is highlighted by Spillane (2000: 56) who argues that many educational policies do not take into account the temporal constraints that teachers are faced with on a daily basis in their classrooms. Time constraints, compounded by large classes, and heavy teaching loads, may lead teachers to strike a balance between the requirements of the policy, and their daily realities. In agreement with Spillane (2000), Stoffels (2004) argues that time management is a rather complex issue within schools. He states that the profile of the learners, the socio-economic status of the school, discipline problems all play a significant role in the way which teachers have to adapt to time management. Vally (2003) observed that discipline problems was one of the most significant factors that hindered time management of most South African school teachers. He observed this challenge, specifically, in rural schools where there was lack of parental support. The views of Spillane (2000), Stoffels (2004) and Vally (2003) resonate with this finding, in so far as, the challenge of time management is concerned. The one size fits all prescription of daily times, and the related activities contained within the FFLP, cannot be implemented in all schools. This was evident from the feedback received from the majority of the teachers in this study. I am of the view that, if all teachers were implementing the FFLP in the way it was intended to be, then by implication, all schools would have covered

more or less the same concepts at a given time, for the FFLP is a standardised programme which “expresses the body of knowledge and set of competencies which all learners should know at different times” (Ravitch, 1996). According to Ravitch (1996), a standardised programme is useful, in so far as, expressing clear expectations of what all learners should know and should be able to do at a particular time.

The FFLP is valuable in so far as it being a standardised programme, however the FFLP could be more valuable, if due recognition is given to teacher agency. The FFLP rests on the assumption that the curriculum (FFLP) can be constructed outside of the classroom and done so by those other than the people who will themselves implement such a body of work. Paris (1993) notes that standardisation (of curriculum or teaching programmes) carries with it the notion, “that curriculum knowledge, i.e. knowledge of what to teach and how to teach it is scientific knowledge, discovered by curriculum experts using methods and prior knowledge that are inaccessible to the typical classroom teacher” (Paris, 1993: 11). Removing such planning from the hands and minds of teachers de-legitimises their own position as authorities of teaching and learning, and of the needs of their learners and communities. The teacher becomes an implementer or technician rather than a creator who is defined outside the process of curriculum development (Paris, 1993:13). As policy analyst Darling-Hammond (1993: 90) notes, “The very definition of ‘professionalism’ in teaching has been turned on its head in public schools. Rather than connoting a high level of training and knowledge applied to practice that must, above all else, serve the needs of clients in intellectually honest ways, many policy makers and administrators use the term to mean unquestioning compliance with agency directives.

I concur with Paris (1993) and Darling-Hammond (1993) that teacher agency is being eroded when teachers are requested to follow standardised programmes developed centrally either by Provinces or National departments of education. Standardised programmes have the tendency to reduce the curriculum, curriculum planning and teaching methods to narrowly technical and rational processes, losing much of what should be powerful and engaging in learning

and teaching” (Hargreaves, 2001: 20). This study found that the FFLP was perceived as standardised programme and some teachers experienced it negatively as the programme was very rigid and did not allow for flexibility (such as for consolidating lessons taught, re-teaching concepts already taught, rigid time frame allocation for activities, prescribed daily teaching activities and prescribed teaching methods).

### **5.2.3. Positive aspects experienced in implementing the FFLP**

Whilst there were a few teachers who experienced difficulties in implementing the FFLP, there were many who experienced the FFLP positively. One of the reasons advanced by the teachers for their positive experience was that the FFLP is a standardised programme, which provided them with clear guidelines. The teachers felt that the standards contained in the milestones helped them to design their own lesson plans and assessments, on the basis of what is important. According to Harris and Carr (1996), standardised programmes can be helpful to different stakeholders, such as the national government, provincial government, school districts, schools, teachers, learners and parents. Harris and Carr (1996) highlight the importance of setting standards and how these standards can be of benefit to the different stakeholders. For the government, standards can serve as a common reference tool, and provide a defined framework for national testing and benchmarking. For provincial governments, school districts and schools, standards can provide a focus for developing new ways to organise curriculum content, instructional programs and assessment plans. Teachers also benefit by understanding the rationale, milestones and key deliverables of the FFLP. The sentiment of standardising programmes as echoed by Harris and Carr (1996), is in keeping with this finding where teachers expressed their appreciation of the FFLP, as a standardized programme and that the FFLP (as a standardised programme) gave them clear guidelines and strategies on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

### **5.2.4. Access to resources**



Most of the teachers interviewed in this study, bemoaned their lack of access to relevant and appropriate resources, in order to effectively implement the FFLP. Pfiffner and Presthus, in Goel and Goel (1994: 8), emphasise the need for appropriate and essential human and material resources, in order to achieve the desirable goals of policies. They point out the importance of access to appropriate resources as one of the key variables in ensuring the success of policy implementation. The key aspects of resources as identified by Presthus, in Goel and Goel (1994:8), are; the quality of the resources, the timeliness of access to the resources, the relevance of the resource and the budget allocation to acquire the resource. This finding of the study revealed that teachers were generally dissatisfied with the late arrival and the sporadic distribution of the FFLP files, and that many of the resources were inappropriate – for example - resources were not written in the LOLT at their particular school. It becomes clear that this finding is not in keeping with the suggestions offered by Presthus, in Goel and Goel (1994: 8), regarding access to resources. While Presthus, in Goel and Goel (1994: 8) highlight the importance of appropriate and relevant resources in so far as policy implementation, this study revealed that teachers did not have access to the relevant resources as prescribed in the FFLP. It was therefore evident that the lack of access to appropriate and relevant resources by teachers impeded their implementation of the FFLP.

#### **5.2.5. Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT)**

The language in education policy (LIEP) makes provision for the determination of a school's language of learning and teaching (LOLT) policy. The LOLT of a school is determined by the school's SGB. In many schools, the LOLT is based on the mother tongue of the majority of the learners.

Regarding LOLT, teachers indicated that the FFLP does not make provision for the teaching of numeracy according to the home language (mother tongue) of the learners. In keeping with the sentiments echoed by the teachers regarding LOLT, Raiker (2002) found that inappropriate mathematical vocabulary can cause problems in the teaching and learning of mathematical concepts. According to Raiker (2002), problems in the teaching and learning of mathematical concepts in part arise from and are compounded by the spoken

language involved. This demonstrates that mathematical language plays a crucial role in the building of sound concepts, and the subsequent development of mathematical thinking. Brown (2011) concurs with Raiker (2002), and argues that conveying meaning is not a matter of vocabulary, but concerns the text, i.e. it takes place simultaneously on a lexical, grammatical and pragmatic level within the classroom. He goes on to argue that the learner first wants to understand not what an individual word is saying, but what the text is saying, as accurately and completely as possible. Brown (2011: 31) states that:

An oral utterance equivalent in the mother tongue is the best and fastest way to fulfil this basic need. Using the mother tongue, we have learned to think, learned to communicate and acquired an intuitive understanding of grammar. The mother tongue opens the door not only to its own grammar, but to all grammars, inasmuch as it awakens the potential for universal grammar that lies within all of us...For this reason, the mother tongue is the master key to understanding knowledge, the tool which gives us the fastest, surest, most precise, and most complete means of accessing and comprehending new information and knowledge.

Webb (2010) supports the notion of promoting mother-tongue based education in South Africa. He cites research findings that warn of dire consequences for learners who did not learn in a language they understood. Webb (2010: 5) observed that learners who did not learn in a language they were familiar with:

- Participated minimally in classroom discussions;
- Performed below par in relation to other students;
- Experienced feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem; and
- Experienced higher rates of failure and repetition, and were more prone to dropping out from school.

I agree with the sentiments echoed by Brown (2011) and Webb (2010) that mother tongue teaching is an important strategy that could be followed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. While LOLT is a commendable

strategy, it is unfortunate that the FFLP does not support LOLT in terms of providing appropriate and relevant resources written in home languages other than English.

#### **5.2.6. Teachers experience varying degrees of school and district support.**

The majority of the teachers indicated that their school and district offered little support in terms of implementing the FFLP. Fullan (2004) argues that many policy initiatives fail because of the lack of appropriate leadership at schools, and within districts. Since there is a widespread trend to increase institutional autonomy, many aspects of planning, and decision-making, have become the responsibility of schools. The principals, working with school management teams (SMTs), school governing bodies (SGBs), the provincial Department of Education, have the primary responsibility of providing leadership and direction for the school. They should ensure that its goals are achieved through the ways in which the school is managed and organised.

From this study, it became evident that in many instances the SMT were apathetic towards the FFLP. Their sporadic support (according to some of the teachers) for the implementation of the FFLP is attributed, in part, to their lack of understanding of the intentions of the FFLP, as well as, their misunderstanding of the implementation of the programme. Teachers felt that the SMT members were not supporting them, because the SMT members were themselves not subject to any kind of advocacy or formal training (i.e. workshops) regarding the implementation of the FFLP. Teachers, therefore, felt that it is for this reason alone that they lack confidence and capacity, as they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills required for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the FFLP, at their respective schools.

This study also revealed that the level of support offered by the SMT varied from school to school. In the absence of workshops, and in-service training, many of the participants relied on their colleagues within the school for support in understanding the FFLP. McLaughlin (1991: 143) suggests that the formation of professional learning groups, which consists of teachers from within the

school, as well as, within the school's geographical proximity will provide opportunities for teachers to meet and discuss their problems/challenges, and to share good practises. McLaughlin (1991: 143) is of the view that in order for a programme to be effectively implemented, one has to understand the frame of reference and "look beyond the formal structures as channels for improvement and stimulating change". This sentiment expressed by McLaughlin (1991) resonates with the findings of this study to the extent that teachers have taken it upon themselves to collaborate and network in the absence of formal structures (such as curriculum committees, grade committees, etc) that the SMT should have had in place.

Barber and Fullen (2005) assert that successful policy implementation requires clear guidelines and direction at all levels of the education system, which they refer to as "tri-level development". Tri-level development, essentially, means focussing on "what has to happen at the school level; at the district level; and at the state [provincial] level" (Fullen, 2005). Thus, effective implementation can only occur when there are total commitment at all three levels of development. This study revealed that there is little synergy, regarding the implementation of the FFLP, between the school, District and provincial levels. Barber and Fullen (2005) argue that the tri-level system serves as gatekeepers for each other and in this way strong monitoring and evaluation strategies could be developed. This study reveals that there is no monitoring system in place to evaluate the implementation of the FFLP, and, therefore, it is noted that the implementation of the FFLP varies from school to school, and teacher to teacher. This is corroborated by the study where certain teachers had positive experiences, while others had negative experiences of the implementation of the FFLP.

The findings of this study also highlight the lack of effective communication between the tri-level partners, namely; the school, District and province. Some teachers felt that the communication between these three levels is ineffective regarding the FFLP and its implementation. The main grievance amongst some teachers, regarding this issue, was around the huge time lag between circulars issued by the provincial department, and District Office to the schools. Many

teachers stated that there was very little support and communication from the District Office. They stated that they were not sure as to whether they were implementing the FFLP the way it was intended to be implemented, and welcomed feedback from the District. This view resonates with McLaughlin (1991) who argues that in order to ensure a sound understanding of the objectives and goals of the programme, both communication and coordination needs to be on the same wavelength, to ensure successful policy implementation. Barber and Fullen (2005:87) also argue that those implementing the policy have to possess the same information base and have to interpret it in the same way as those who have formulated the policy. Pressman and Widavsky (1984) argue that it is through effective communication that instructions to implement policies are expected to be transmitted to the appropriate personnel in a clear manner, while such orders must be accurate and consistent. Inadequate information can lead to a misunderstanding on the part of the teachers who may be confused as to what, exactly, is required of them. In effect, implementation instructions that are not transmitted, that are distorted in transmission, that are vague, or that are inconsistent may cause serious obstacles to policy implementation. Indeed, this study underscores the observation of all of the above authors, who state that policy implementation must include multi levels of communication between the tri-level partners.

### **5.3. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS**

In this chapter, I discussed the findings that emerged after having analysed the data. I discussed the following findings, namely; lack of understanding of the FFLP, positive and negative experiences in following the specifications of the FFLP, access to resources, LOLT and the varying degrees of school and district support. The discussion and analysis of the findings took into account, views expressed by various researchers in the field of policy implementation, and its associated challenges. I used these views to corroborate and establish trends between the findings of this study and with what other researchers have found.

The findings reveal that many teachers experienced challenges in implementing the FFLP. The challenges ranged from poor understanding of the FFLP, lack of access to resources, varying degrees of support from the school and District and the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). While some teachers experienced the implementation of the FFLP positively others experienced it negatively. Based on the challenges experienced by teachers, I offer recommendations in the section that follows.

## **5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, I offer the following recommendations:

### **5.4.1. Continuous Professional Learning (CPL)**

There is an urgent need for in-service training/workshops for teachers, in order to, improve their understanding of various aspects, regarding the FFLP. There is a need for professional development in the form of in-service training and workshops to strengthen teachers' subject matter knowledge of mathematics, so that in the classroom context they can take advantage of opportunities to enhance pupils' understanding of the mathematics, in which they are engaged. While CPL can play a significant role, the idea of establishing and promoting Communities of Practice (CoPs) must also be given some thought. CoPs are formed by teachers who engage in a process of collective learning. This usually occurs in groups where members of the group share the same interest and work towards the common goal of improving teaching practice. Foundation Phase Head of Departments should be mandated to undertake this task within schools.

### **5.4.2. LOLT**

A needs analysis should be undertaken to ascertain how many teachers require training and development in the respective African languages being taught as the LOLT in specific schools. Appropriate teacher development should be offered to these teachers so that they could become competent to teach through the medium of the relevant African language which is the LOLT of the

school. Publishers should be encouraged to commission teachers who are competent in an African Language to write and compile LTSM for Grade Three numeracy.

#### **5.4.3. Monitoring evaluation of the implementation of the FFLP**

It is recommended that a task team be designated to develop a coherent strategy to oversee, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the FFLP. This strategy should be the result of engagement and meetings between schools, Districts and the Provincial Departments of Education (PDoE). Functional task team structures should be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the FFLP at the school level, District level and Provincial level. These structures should be mandated to compile monthly reports which could be collated by the Provincial task team. The Provincial task team must analyse the monthly reports in order to establish problems, challenges and “pressure points” that impede the effective implementation of the FFLP. Based on the identification of the problems, challenges and pressure points, the provincial task team must develop strategies and intervention programmes to respond to the challenges and problem areas as experienced and identified by the teachers.

#### **5.5.4. The need for collaboration and networking**

It is recommended that both schools and Districts begin to develop strategies to promote collaboration and networking amongst teachers and District Officials (Senior Education Specialist in particular). It is recommended that appointing grade co-ordinators should be promoted in each school to co-ordinate both curricular and extracurricular activities for that particular grade, which will include the FFLP. The role of the grade co-ordinator could be formalised to include cross pollination of teaching strategies, teaching methods and all other facets of the FFLP.

#### **5.5.5. Access to resources**

It is recommended that current administrative systems be reviewed in the light of schools, and teachers, not receiving the FFLP files and resources on time. It is also recommended that the National Department of Basic Education revisit its current policy on the centralised distribution of FFLP related resources to schools. It is also recommended that a thorough needs analysis be undertaken to ascertain the resource needs of schools.

On the issue of language, I would like to recommend that Learner Teacher Support Materials (LTSM) for the FFLP be available in all eleven official languages. This will assist teachers to teach effectively in the different home languages, in accordance with the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of their school.

#### **5.4.6. The role of the SMT must be reviewed regarding the FFLP**

It is recommended that all future policy or programme initiatives be workshopped amongst SMT members, who should then be entrusted with the monitoring of the implementation of the FFLP at their schools. SMT members must have a thorough understanding of the programme so that they can be in a position to coach and mentor teachers how to effectively implement the FFLP.

#### **5.4.7. The role of the district must be reviewed regarding the FFLP**

District Officials must ensure regular monitoring of the implementation of the FFLP. Information on the problems and challenges regarding the FFLP implementation should be compiled and forwarded to the Provincial structures who in turn can inform the DoE.

### **5.5. CONCLUSION**

The FFLP is an innovative strategy that is aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning of Numeracy in Grade Three. As a policy, the intentions



of the FFLP seem to be promising, however, the implementation of the FFLP proved to be problematic amongst many teachers. Teachers cited their lack of understanding of the FFLP, inaccessibility to relevant and appropriate resources, varying degrees of support from the school and District and LOLT as some of the factors that impeded their implementation of the FFLP. Some teachers however, cited positive experiences in implementing the FFLP.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

#### RESEARCH REQUEST FORM

#### REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN INSTITUTIONS AND/OR OFFICES OF THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

##### 1. PARTICULARS OF THE RESEARCHER

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>1.1</b>                                       | <b>Details of the Researcher</b> |
| <b><i>Surname and Initials:</i></b>              | Govender P                       |
| <b><i>First Name/s:</i></b>                      | Poomoney                         |
| <b><i>Title (Prof / Dr / Mr / Mrs / Ms):</i></b> | Mrs.                             |
| <b><i>Student Number (if relevant):</i></b>      | <u>200834473</u>                 |
| <b><i>ID Number:</i></b>                         | 6603160105081                    |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>1.2</b>                 | <b>Private Contact Details</b>              |
| <b><i>Home Address</i></b> | <b><i>Postal Address (if different)</i></b> |
| 10 Stinkwood Road,         | 10 Stinkwood Road,                          |
| Marlands,                  | Marlands,                                   |

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Germiston,   | Germiston,                      |
|  |                                 |
| <b><i>Postal Code: 1401</i></b>                      | <b><i>Postal Code: 1401</i></b> |
| <b><i>Tel: 011 8224576</i></b>                       |                                 |
| <b><i>Cell: 084 5557707</i></b>                      |                                 |
| <b><i>Fax: 011 3896017(work)</i></b>                 |                                 |
| <b><i>E-mail: Salosh.Govender@gauteng.gov.za</i></b> |                                 |

## 2. PURPOSE & DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>2.1</b>  | <i><b>Purpose of the Research (Place cross where appropriate)</b></i> |
| <u><b>Undergraduate Study - Self</b></u>  |   |
| <b>Postgraduate Study - Self</b>  | X   |
| <b>Private Company/Agency – Commissioned by Provincial Government or Department</b> |   |
| <b>Private Research by Independent Researcher</b>                                   |   |
| <u><b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b></u>   |   |
| <u><b>National Department of Education</b></u>                                      |   |
| <u><b>Commissions and Committees</b></u>  |   |
| <u><b>Independent Research Agencies</b></u>   |   |
| <u><b>Statutory Research Agencies</b></u>   |   |
| <u><b>Higher Education Institutions</b></u>   |   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>2.2</b>  | <i><b>Full title of Thesis / Dissertation / Research Project</b></i> |
| <u>An investigation of the experiences of grade three teachers in the implementation of the Foundations for Learning Programme in Numeracy.</u> |  |
|   |  |
|   |  |

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>2.3</b> | <b>Value of the Research to Education (Attach Research Proposal)</b> |
|            |  |
|            |  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>2.5</b>                                     | <b>Student and Postgraduate Enrolment Particulars (if applicable)</b> |
| <b>Name of institution where enrolled:</b>     | University of Johannesburg  |
| <b>Degree / Qualification:</b>                 | Masters in Education  |
| <b>Faculty and Discipline / Area of Study:</b> | Education   |
| <b>Name of Supervisor / Promoter:</b>          | Prof. Sarah Gravett   |

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>2.6</b>                       | <b>Employer (where applicable)</b>      |
| <b>Name of Organisation:</b>     | GDE: Ekurhuleni South District          |
| <b>Position in Organisation:</b> | Senior Education Specialist: Assessment |
| <b>Head of Organisation:</b>     | Director: Mr S.D Thinane                |

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Street Address:                | 2 Robin Close, Infinity Office Park<br>Meyersdal Alberton, |
| Postal Code:                   | 1456   |
| Telephone Number (Code + Ext): | 011 389 6216   |
| Fax Number:                    | 011 389 6017   |
| E-mail:                        | Salosh.Govender@gauteng.gov.za                             |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>2.7</b> | <b>PERSAL Number (where applicable)</b> |
|------------|---|

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

### 3. PROPOSED RESEARCH METHOD/S

(Please indicate by placing a cross in the appropriate block whether the following modes would be adopted)

#### 3.1 Questionnaire/s (If Yes, supply copies of each to be used)

|     |  |    |  |
|-----|--|----|--|
| YES |  | NO |  |
|-----|--|----|--|

#### 3.2 Interview/s (If Yes, provide copies of each schedule)

|     |   |    |  |
|-----|---|----|--|
| YES | x | NO |  |
|-----|---|----|--|

#### 3.3 Use of official documents

|   |   |    |  |
|---|---|----|--|
| YES   | x | NO |  |
| <i>If Yes, please specify the document/s:</i>             |   |    |  |
| The FFLP Gazette No. 30880, Assessment Framework Document |   |    |  |
| NCS Policy Document                                       |   |    |  |

#### 3.4 Workshop/s / Group Discussions (If Yes, Supply details)

|     |  |    |  |
|-----|--|----|--|
| YES |  | NO |  |
|-----|--|----|--|

**3.5 Standardised Tests (e.g. Psychometric Tests)**

|  |  |           |  |
|--|--|-----------|--|
| <b>YES</b>   |  | <b>NO</b> |  |
| <i>If Yes, please specify the test/s to be used and provide a copy/ies</i> |  |           |  |
|  |  |           |  |
|  |  |           |  |
|  |  |           |  |

**4. INSTITUTIONS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH**

**4.1 Type of Institutions (Please indicate by placing a cross alongside all types of institutions to be researched)**

| INSTITUTIONS   | Mark with X here |
|--|------------------|
| <i>Primary Schools</i>                               | X                |
| <b>Secondary Schools</b>                             |                  |
| <b>ABET Centres</b>                                  |                  |
| <b>ECD Sites</b>                                     |                  |
| <b>LSEN Schools</b>                                  |                  |
| <b>Further Education &amp; Training Institutions</b> |                  |
| <b>Other</b>   |                  |

**4.2 Number of institution/s involved in the study (Kindly place a sum and the total in the spaces provided)**



| Type of Institution                                  | Total    |
|--|----------|
| <i>Primary Schools</i>                               | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Secondary Schools</b>                             |          |
| <b>ABET Centres</b>                                  |          |
| <b>ECD Sites</b>                                     |          |
| <b>LSEN Schools</b>                                  |          |
| <b>Further Education &amp; Training Institutions</b> |          |
| <b>Other</b>   |          |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>                                   |          |

**4.3 Name/s of institutions to be researched (Please complete on a separate sheet if space is found to be insufficient)**

| Name/s of Institution/s       |
|-------------------------------|
| 1. Realeboha Primary          |
| <b>2. Palmridge Combined</b>  |
| <b>3. Thembaletu Primary</b>  |
| <b>4. Sonqoba Primary</b>     |
| <b>5. Collin Mann Primary</b> |
|                               |
|                               |
|                               |
|                               |

**4.4 District/s where the study is to be conducted. (Please indicate by placing a cross alongside the relevant district/s)**

| District                  |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| <i>Johannesburg East</i>  |          |
| <i>Johannesburg South</i> |          |
| <i>Johannesburg West</i>  |          |
| <i>Johannesburg North</i> |          |
| <i>Gauteng North</i>      |          |
| <i>Gauteng West</i>       |          |
| <i>Tshwane North</i>      |          |
| <i>Tshwane South</i>      |          |
| <i>Ekhuruleni South</i>   | <b>x</b> |
| <i>Ekhuruleni West</i>    |          |
| <i>Sedibeng East</i>      |          |
| <i>Sedibeng West</i>      |          |

| If Head Office/s (Please indicate Directorate/s) |
|--|
|  |

**NOTE:**

If you have not as yet identified your sample/s, a list of the names and addresses of all the institutions and districts under the jurisdiction of the GDE is available from the department at a small fee.

**4.5 Number of learners to be involved per school (Please indicate the number by gender)**

| Grade         | 1        |          | 2        |          | 3        |          | 4        |          | 5        |          | 6        |          |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <i>Gender</i> | <b>B</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>G</b> |
| <i>Number</i> |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |

| Grade  | 7 |   | 8 |   | 9 |   | 10 |   | 11 |   | 12 |   |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|
| Gender | B | G | B | G | B | G | B  | G | B  | G | B  | G |
| Number |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |   |    |   |    |   |

**4.6** Number of educators/officials involved in the study (Please indicate the number in the relevant column)

| Type of staff | Educators | HODs | Deputy Principals | Principal | Lecturers | Office Based Officials |
|---------------|-----------|------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Number        | 10        |      |                   |           |           |                        |

**4.7** Are the participants to be involved in groups or individually?

| Participation |   |
|---------------|---|
| Groups        |   |
| Individually  | X |

**4.8** Average period of time each participant will be involved in the test or other research activities (Please indicate time in minutes)

| Participant/s | Activity              | Time              |
|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Teachers      | Individual Interviews | 1 and a half hour |
|               |                       |                   |
|               |                       |                   |

**4.9** Time of day that you propose to conduct your research.

|              |              |                      |
|--------------|--------------|----------------------|
| School Hours | During Break | After School Hours X |
|--------------|--------------|----------------------|

**4.10** School term/s during which the research would be undertaken

|            |             |             |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| First Term | Second Term | Fourth Term |
|------------|-------------|-------------|

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | X |
|--|--|---|

| DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <i>1. I declare that all statements made by myself in this application are true and accurate.</i>  |                           |
| <i>2. I have taken note of all the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research and undertake to abide by them.</i> |                           |
| Signature:   | Signed by Mrs P. Govender |
| Date:  | 2010/ 10/ 19              |

| DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR / PROMOTER / LECTURER  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| <i>I declare that: Mrs. Govender</i>   |                            |
| 1. <i>The applicant is enrolled at the institution / <u>employed by the organisation to which the undersigned is attached.</u></i>   |                            |
| 2. <i>The questionnaires / structured interviews / tests meet the criteria of:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Educational Accountability</i></li> <li>• <i>Proper Research Design</i></li> <li>• <i>Sensitivity towards Participants</i></li> <li>• <i>Correct Content and Terminology</i></li> <li>• <i>Acceptable Grammar</i></li> <li>• <i>Absence of Non-essential / Superfluous items</i></li> </ul> |                            |
| Surname:   | Prof Gravett               |
| First Name/s:  | Sarah                      |
| Institution / Organisation:  | University of Johannesburg |
| Faculty / Department (where relevant):   | Education                  |
| Telephone:   | 0828085426                 |
| Fax:   |                            |
| E-mail:  | sgravett@uj.ac.za          |
| Signature:   | Signed                     |
| Date:  | 2010/10/05                 |

## **APPENDIX B**

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION (FROM PRINCIPALS) TO INTERVIEW TEACHERS**

10 Stinkwood Road  
Marlands  
Germiston  
1401

13 September 2010

Mrs Van Der Waltz  
The Principal  
Germiston South Primary School  
Germiston  
1401

Permission to visit your school to undertake an interview with two teachers

Dear Ms Fouche

I, Poomoney Govender, am presently employed at the Gauteng Department of Education in the Ekurhuleni South District Office. I am currently enrolled in a master's degree in Teacher Development under the supervision of Professor Sarah Gravett. I wish to inform you that approval has been granted to me by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to undertake research about the experiences of grade three teachers in implementing the FFLP.

I am writing to inform you that I have selected your school for the sample of my research. I am requesting you to kindly be aware that I shall be visiting your school to undertake interviews with two teachers. Due to strict confidentiality, I cannot divulge the names of the two teachers who have consented to be part of my sample for this research. I shall provide you with the exact dates and times when I shall be conducting the interviews. I assure you that the interviews will not cut across teaching time and thus there shall be no disruption to teaching in so far as the interviews are concerned.

The reference number for the GDE approval of my research is.....

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

---

Poomoney Govender

## **APPENDIX C**

### **REQUEST (TO PARTICIPANTS) TO PARTICIPATE IN MY STUDY**

10 Stinkwood Road  
Marlands  
Germiston  
1401

12 August 2010

Re: Request to participate in my study

Dear Ms/ Mrs \_\_\_\_\_

I, the undersigned, am presently employed in the Ekurhuleni South District office by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). I am currently enrolled in a master's degree in Teacher Development under the guidance and supervision of Professor Sarah Gravett.

In partial fulfilment of this degree, I have to complete a research essay in which I wish to focus on the implementation of the Foundations for Learning Programme (FFLP) in grade three numeracy. As you may be aware that the teaching and learning of mathematics in South Africa is of grave concern, there are numerous national strategies that have been put in place to improve learner performance in numeracy in South Africa. As such I wish to investigate the implementation of one such strategy namely the FFLP amongst grade three teachers in numeracy. The study which I aim to undertake in the following months will be from an interpretative paradigm and will focus on gaining an understanding of the experiences of grade three teachers in implementing the FFLP in numeracy. through the medium of in-depth interviews. The necessary permission for this study to be conducted with the selected teachers has been granted by the Gauteng Department of Education.

I would like to request your permission to conduct an interview with you. I would like to assure you that whatever is discussed in the interview will be subject to the utmost confidentiality. Accordingly, I would like to request that the accompanying slip be completed and signed to indicate your consent to be interviewed for the above purpose. To facilitate confidentiality, I will telephone prior to collecting these slips myself.

Thanking you in anticipation

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Poomoney Govender  
Student

## **Appendix D**

### **REPLY SLIP FOR INFORMED CONSENT**

13 August 2010

I, the undersigned, Ms/ Mrs \_\_\_\_\_, ( please print full name)  
hereby grant consent to Poomoney Govender, employed by the Gauteng  
Department of Education , to conduct an interview with me for her research in partial  
fulfilment of her master's degree.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant



## **APPENDIX E**

### **EXTRACT OF INTERVIEW WITH A GRADE THREE TEACHER**

**S: Salosh -researcher**

**M - Maggie - participant**

Maggie is a foundation phase educator at a Quintile two school teaching grade three for the first time.

S: I want to thank you for accepting to be a participant in this research. Do you give consent to have this interview audio recorded?

M: Yes. I agree to have the interview audio recorded.

S: Thank You. As I have indicated earlier on, the purpose of the interview is to understand the experiences of grade three teachers in implementing the FFLP.

Maggie, Can you begin by describing your experience in implementing the FFLP in numeracy with your grade three learners?

M: Let me tell you about my experience. This is the first year that I am teaching grade three. When I first came to this school I was teaching grade one. I had no experience in teaching grade three. Then there was this FFL milestone and through trial and error, I began teaching grade three. With the FFLP, at least I knew that I had a guideline to support me. I knew what to teach and how to teach in grade three. On day one I knew that I had to teach this, and then follow through with that and that.

But at times I am not able to follow the guidelines as it is prescribed because of time. Also the slow learners do not cope with the activities and the document does not cater for them. So much has changed since we were trained at the college as teachers. Now we are expected to teach something totally different in a new way, not like the way we were trained.

S: Maggie, as you have just stated that the way you were trained to teach as a teacher was totally different from what you are expected to do now, can you please explain further?

M: I trained to become a teacher between 1993 to 1995. We were never taught for example how to do group work. We were trained to teach using the whole class method. Now I am expected to do group work but I not sure how. I never even attended OBE training. If I attended OBE workshops I would have understood group work requires. The first time I learnt how to do group work was when I was appointed at a LSEN school. There every learner has to be catered and taught individually as every child is different. But I am still not sure if what I am doing now is correct or not.

S: Seeing that you were qualified to teach in the intersen phase, and this was your first year teaching foundation phase, what support did you receive from your school?

M: There was not much support. I had to find figure it out myself by reading and understanding. There was not even any workshops I could attend. Luckily there was the milestones document. That was a great help. I knew exactly what to teach and when to teach the concept. I had some difficulty in understanding some of the concepts myself but when we met for the weekly meetings I got clarity from my colleagues. This helped.

S: Maggie could you please comment on the level of support if any from the district level?

M: There was no support. When I asked my colleagues how they were doing group work, they were just as confused. They would say "I'm struggling. I still don't know what to do". Everyone was teaching by trial and error. Sometimes I think at least if someone could show us how to teach the way we are supposed to teach, then we will know how to teach. What is put onto paper theoretically is not easy to practice. Even if someone explains to you how to divide your groups is not easy to understand. It actually sounds chaotic. You can only understand if someone shows you practically how it is to be done.

S: I now want to take you back to your earlier discussion. You indicated that you had difficulty in doing all of the activities as indicated in the planning files because of

time. Apart from your experience that prevents you from following the time allocations?

M: Yes. Group work takes up lots of time. Some groups work fast whilst some work slowly. You have to wait for everyone to finish before you move to the next activity. I find that there are also too many activities to be done every day. If you do not complete what has to be done within a day, then you cannot complete this the next day because each day has a different set of new activities.

S: Can you please explain and comment what you mean by stating that each day there are new activities included.

M: Each day there are new activities that have to be taught. A new concept is introduced even though the learners have not yet mastered the previous concepts. But in my teaching I ensure that I revise the previous concepts every day before teaching the new concept. This is not in the FFLP files. That is why I am not able to do everything in the files. I concentrate on what I think is important and leave out the others. There is no room for revision and reteaching of concepts.

S: Could you explain how you provide opportunities for revision and consolidation of concepts in your teaching.

M: Every morning I revise the previous concepts taught because I know that learners need repetition so that they can master the concepts. Sometimes I re-teach the concepts I also give homework. But parents do not know how to support the learners. This takes up a lot of time to mark.

S: With reference to the FFLP lesson plan files, what is your opinion about the way the lessons are developed?

M: I think that more days should be spent on a concept because today you teach shapes then tomorrow it is problem solving and the learners have not mastered that. Then when we go back to shapes at a later lesson, the learners have already forgotten what was already taught to them. More time is spent in revising that

concept. Most of the times I have to reteach the concept again. This is not in the FFLP files. This is what makes it difficult to follow the FFLP files as it is. There is no progression of concepts.

S: Do you use the FFLP file as a stand-alone resource in your teaching?

M: I started using the FFL lesson plans as it was presented but I then realised that it was not enough. At times I use the FFL file as a guideline and integrate it together with other books for ideas. Sometimes I feel that the activities are too simple for the high flyers. I also feel that our learners must be exposed to different examples so that they can be prepared for the common exams. I feel that the department should provide common resources, example textbooks to all schools so that teachers can choose the activities for their learners. I also feel that the file does not cover everything that the learners are being assessed on in the common exams. If I had to follow only the FFLP files, our learners are never going to be ready for the Districts common assessment. That is of a much higher standard.

S: You have mentioned the common assessments from the district. Could you please explain what is your experience of the common assessments in numeracy?

M: Common exams are useful. We were told to implement FFLP using the milestones and the files, which we have been doing. But the common assessments set by the district does not assess what we have been teaching from the files. Most of the questions are not familiar even to me as a teacher. That is why our learners are underachieving. I feel that all schools should be given the common textbooks or workbooks and these common exams should be based on these books. In this way we will know what to expect in the papers. At times when my learners perform so poorly in the assessments, it makes me feel as if I have achieved nothing. I feel so de-motivated. Another challenge is that our learners are learning numeracy in English when their home language is an African language.

S: Could you please tell me more about your experience with regard to the language issue at your school?

M: Most of the learners at our school are from the squatter camps. They all speak different languages. No one type of dominant language can be identified. I am isi-Zulu speaking and not able to speak all of their languages and cannot code switch to learners. Our medium of instruction is English. Very few learners understand English. Reading word problem is a real problem. I believe that if I had a class of isiZulu learners only, I will achieve greater success in my teaching. A lot of time is wasted in interpreting problems to the learners so that they can understand. I also rely on resources to develop understanding. This is visual and learners can understand by seeing what I am doing.

M: What is the reason for your school opting to use English as the medium of instruction even though it is not the home-language of the majority of learners at your school?

S: It is because of staffing issue. We only have teachers who speak Isi Zulu. None of us can speak any of the other African languages. We have at 4 other different languages spoken by our learners.

S: Have your school considered employing more teachers who can speak the relevant languages?

M: This is not at all possible because of financial constraints. We are unable to employ more teachers to teach in the various languages. Our school is a “No –fee” paying school. We get only R35000- 00 per year. We just cannot afford to employ more teachers. We do not have extra classrooms. Our classrooms are packed ....no space to walk.

We also cannot consider changing the medium of instruction unless we get teachers who can speak the appropriate languages.

S: Can you tell me about the level of support you received in terms of understanding the FFLP.

M: We have regular collaboration at school. We meet every week. We have only one class per grade. Sharing of ideas takes place. This ensures that every grade

knows what is being done. Everyone is free to ask for help. I have not attended any workshops/ cluster meeting on FFLP. I think I attended only one cluster meeting when we received the files. There was no discussion... nothing whatsoever. We are fortunate because my principal is a foundation phase teacher and she really supports us from what she knows. Although she knows that we should be doing group work, she understands that this is impossible in our school because of space. Our classrooms are overcrowded with up to 70 learners in each class. So we all teach the whole class. She has tried to procure a lot of resources for us to use in teaching.

S: Can you comment on how the resources have influenced your implementation of the FFLP in teaching numeracy?

M: We have received lots of resources from sponsors which helped to improve learners understanding. In the past we had no resources as our school received very little money from the GDE. We were wrongly categorised as a Quintiles 5 school whereas we were actually a Quintile 2 school. Lots of time went into making resources. But we are not sure how exactly to use them. With regard to the files, we received one per grade. Luckily we have only one of each grade. No need to share files.

S: Thank you. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

M: I just want to add that I hope my input is useful. I also want to add that if it was not for the milestones I would have been at a total loss in teaching numeracy. The NCS document is too vague and broad. At least the milestones and the files provide clear guidelines and direction. But as I stated earlier, there need to be some changes to improve.

## APPENDIX F

### LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Enquiries: Nomvula Ubisi (011)3550488

#### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

*Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:*

- 1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
- 2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
- 3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
- 4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
- 5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
- 6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
- 7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.*
- 8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
- 9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
- 10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*

11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
12. *On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.*
13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

**The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.**

Kind regards

Nomvula Ubisi  
DEPUTY CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST: RESEARCH